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ABSTRACT

This book examines the proposal of individuals in England's university extension movement in the final 2 decades of the 19th century to create a part-time teaching university that shared the following similarities with present-day open universities: a policy of admitting all individuals likely to benefit from the university irrespective of their age, sex, or social status; imposition of the fewest possible entrance/matriculation requirements; program of part-time study under university teachers extending over 8 or more years and leading to a degree; curriculum based on a modular structure and designed to meet the needs of individuals compelled to remain in their ordinary occupations; examinations based largely on assessment of each course as it was taken; and courses offered in any place where acceptable teachers could be made available. The campaign to establish a "floating university" for part-time adult students is traced within the context of the principles and organizational problems of the era's university extension movement and the rapid development of conventional university education. Special attention is paid to the reasons underlying the original proposal's failure (including administrators' self-interest and socioeconomic conditions) and factors leading to the successful establishment of the present-day open university. (Included are 181 endnotes and references.) (MN)

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A BACKSTAIRS TO A DEGREE

Demands for an open university in late Victorian England

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Demands for an open university in late Victorian England

Stuart Marriott

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"The time has come to open a new avenue to university privileges and degrees. What we want is a new ideal of a university career."

R. D. Roberts, August 1891

"No-one who is interested in University Extension teaching wishes to make it a backstairs to a degree."

M. E. Sadler, August 1891

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Introduction

In 1891 an obscure educational magazine, the *University Extension Journal*, offered a rash prediction:

> Before long some University will seize the unequalled opportunity . . . will boldly lay down a curriculum of study for degrees on new lines suited to the needs of those who desire to carry on their intellectual culture side by side with the regular business of life.[1]

To many of the *Journal*'s readers it was not at all a foolish suggestion, coming as it did in the middle of a campaign to persuade two bodies of national importance to set up what was virtually an open university for mature students. Between 1884 and 1897 there was current in England, and for part of that time in Wales too, a proposal to create a part-time teaching university organised along entirely novel lines.

Had that marvel ever seen the light of day it would have embodied some quite remarkable ideas:

(i) admission of any person likely to benefit, irrespective of age, sex or social status;

(ii) imposition of the fewest possible requirements in the way of entry qualifications or matriculation;

(iii) a programme of part-time study, under university teachers, extending over eight years or more and leading to a degree;

(iv) a curriculum designed to meet the needs of those who were bound to remain in their usual occupations, being a modular structure made up of the smallest educationally viable units;

(v) examinations based largely on the assessment of each course a sit was taken, with little reliance on set-piece tests;

(vi) courses offered in any place where an acceptable teacher could make himself available, the university to be based on the recognition of teaching and not of formal institutions.

A constitution of that kind, proposed eighty years before our own Open University or Council for National Academic Awards were thought of, reads like an educational fantasy. Yet it was seriously intended. Its advocates intruded vigorously into the planning of two new universities; the House of Commons was asked to endorse their scheme; two royal

commissions received it with a certain amount of sympathy. History may be unkind to failures but it is odd that such a radical initiative has never been properly celebrated or studied. In an age of headlong theorising about new modes of higher education it would seem to be almost topical. The neglect results perhaps from the fact that this open university of nearly a century ago was the brainchild of a movement that educational historians mention only in passing or relegate to the category of mere "adult education".

The adult education in question was the University Extension Movement, the ancestor of the extramural departments of the universities of today — but a more notable phenomenon in its own time than extramural provision is in our own. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century there were other forms of adult education of some statistical significance, such as the quasi-religious adult schools and the municipal night schools; it was University Extension however that showed the most elaborate organisation, the keenest sense of mission and the best articulated doctrine of aims and methods. For a period of thirty years from about 1870 this movement for the extension of university teaching claimed an intimate connection with reform in the wider fields of intermediate and higher education; it saw itself not as an excrescence on the "system" but as one medium through which stirrings of broad national significance were making themselves felt.

From the middle of the century the elastic phrase "university extension" had been wrapped around a variety of schemes for reforming Oxford and Cambridge, for making them contribute more actively and less exclusively to the country's wellbeing. It meant successively the recruitment of poor men to be trained for the Anglican clergy, the reduction of the cost of a university education especially through arrangements for noncollegiate residence, the transfer of endowments or staff to satellite colleges or faculties in the great centres of industry and population.

During these early years a less noisily debated form of "extension" was already going on. College fellows from Oxford and Cambridge and professors from London were taking themselves off into the provinces to meet the clients of mechanics' institutes, middle-class women's educational associations and societies of working people, trying to give them some better educational fare than the genteel amusements that were commonly available. These were the "missionary dons",[2] men often

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closely connected with the demand for academic reform but cherishing a conception of university extension more broad and generous than those generally discussed within the university walls.

Towards the end of the 1860s the idea began to emerge of formalising this missionary work as an organised system of popular higher education, a kind of peripatetic university. In 1873 Cambridge agreed after an adroit campaign by the reform party to supervise teaching beyond the limits of the University. Under the prosaically accurate and politically neutral title of "Local Lectures" an extensive programme of extramural teaching quickly developed. Three years later a public society was formed in London for the same purpose, and Oxford opened an Extension office in 1878. The title of "University Extension" now became the almost exclusive property of this new movement.

The early record of Extension was chequered. After a brilliant initial showing by the Cambridge branch the whole growth wilted for a time. In the mid 1880s it revived and then flourished in numbers and self-confidence until a few years after the turn of the century. In the autumn term of 1890 for example Cambridge, London and Oxford provided 233 lecture courses and had over 23,000 people in regular attendance.[3] Of those rather more than 2,000 were also doing private study and planning to take the examination at the end of their course.

Those who managed and gave a philosophy to this movement recognised two senses in their own use of its title. The narrower reference was to the administrative reality, a widely scattered provision of courses of liberal study for anyone who wished to take advantage of them. More ambitiously University Extension was held to be a part of the continuing reform of the universities (and it is significant that the term "adult education" was little used at the time — the preferred image was of university education for people past their schooldays). Before the rise of the independent provincial universities and the consequences of the Education Act of 1902 forced the Extenders to reduce their claims they aspired to cut a serious figure on the scene of national policy.[4] They wanted a more open and generous system of education out of school, and they wanted an assured, institutional place in it.

The history of the English universities in the nineteenth century revolved continually around the two great issues of resources and privileges. In the beginning Oxford and Cambridge locked up and used for their own antiquated purposes the only substantial endowments that

were available for higher education; similarly they monopolised the crucial right to confer degrees.

The University of London (1836) was the first and most notable confrontation of privilege. It originated in an alliance of middle-class radicals, secularists and the medical profession, and found its identity as a means of access to degrees. Originally its function was to validate the work of affiliated colleges, and it debarred itself from providing teaching on its own account. Then under a revised charter of 1858, as befitted its utilitarian origins, it was deliberately turned into nothing more or less than a huge machinery of examination. Except in medicine the attendance requirement was lifted and London degrees were open to any male candidate who could pass the tests.

Durham University received its charter in 1837. The foundation was largely a ploy to divert radical attention from the great and underused wealth of the Dean and Chapter, and for thirty years the University led a rather aimless existence. Its revival was part of the country-wide interest in local colleges that quickened in the late 1860s.

Elsewhere the ready availability of London degrees did nothing in itself to ease the problem of resources. After the middle of the century groups of public-minded citizens up and down the provinces were struggling to raise the money with which to found their own local institutes of higher and technological education. As the new colleges began to open and the precious "endowment" accumulated the problem of privilege returned to plague them: were they to prepare their students under the remote control of the London examining machine or were they to confer their own degrees? When people spoke of the "universities" they almost always meant Oxford and Cambridge; the mystique was very powerful. London was regarded by many as an expedient evil. Any proposal to create new powers to grant degrees was vigorously contested, not only by the sons of Oxbridge but also by the vested interest that London itself had spawned. The whole character of higher education was thought to be at stake—liberals and conservatives were heard to voice the same fears—and accusations of low standards and provincial philistinism were bandied about.

After a great deal of pressing by Owens College at Manchester and rounds of intense debate the charter of the Victoria University was granted in 1880. Even here compromise ruled in the shape of a clumsy federal constitution in which no single college could acquire the discretion

to act as a university in its own right. Another twenty years passed before the next charter was awarded to an English college, and then the battles of the nineteenth century were over. Birmingham University (1900) marked a turning point; Victoria soon broke apart and before long all the major provincial colleges followed into independence.

University adult education achieved official status at a crucial point in this process. Its earliest phase coincided with the successful attempts of the 1870s to found provincial university colleges, and the Cambridge Local Lectures were contributory to such developments in Leeds, Liverpool, Nottingham and Sheffield. Cambridge collaborated also with the colleges in Birmingham, Manchester and Newcastle-upon-Tyne.[5] Those who persuaded Oxford to sponsor teaching outside its own walls had already helped to found Bristol University College. The motives of the pioneers of University Extension were mixed. There was a democratising urge to provide teaching of the highest standard to localities deprived of intellectual nourishment; there was also an element of paternalism, a wish to keep the new bodies in the leading strings of the ancient universities and to make sure that they walked along the ways of liberal education.

At the same time Extension had an internal problem of how to enforce standards and prove itself worthy of the university accolade. Collaboration with the local colleges was part of its proposed solution; the building of permanent institutions and the introduction of systematic courses of study were thought of as one process. On their side of the bargain the Extenders obviously planned to obtain for the colleges some useful kind of academic concession from the old universities. Before long the internal needs of the colleges and of Extension proved to be at variance; the two movements drew apart, and Extension was left with its problem of standards — and with its democratising idealism. An influential group within the movement continued to believe that the only way of satisfying both sides of the equation was to attain complete academic recognition for external studies.

Having involved itself in the work of creating resources for higher education University Extension could not avoid the other question of opening up academic privileges. Its grand, ambiguous slogans and aspirations led to all kinds of philosophical and organisational difficulties, but they provided a background of commitment against which the notion of unrestricted graduation and a totally open university could be conceived.

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University education for the whole nation

The dead end of the local colleges

University Extension as a formal organisation rather than an abstract policy was virtually the creation of one man. James Stuart was a young fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge; he was a Scot, a scientist, a feminist and an energetic worker for all kinds of academic and social reform. Experience as a "missionary don" in the north of England fixed in his mind the image of a peripatetic university; in about 1871 he began to interest influential Cambridge men in his idea and to encourage his contacts in the provinces to make their local educational ambitions known to the University.[1] The plan was to develop a novel institution for higher study in a number of the larger towns; in one structure there would be combined a fixed college and a peripatetic programme of teaching for the surrounding districts, the latter to be provided through a network of self-governing voluntary committees. Stuart saw such a "local college" as a complete Extension system in itself, and as a means of bringing part-time liberal education to adults of every social class.

It was assumed that the colleges would be closely tied to the old universities by the secondment of teaching staff and the offer of examinations and academic distinctions. As the work developed the students would be given the right to compete for whatever honours the universities bestowed on their own inmates. In 1871 in an address to the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association, entitled *University Extension*, Stuart expounded his philosophy and made it clear that he was interested in a system of totally open access to the benefits of a university education. And then in an open letter to the resident members of his own University in which he explained the scheme rather more systematically he proposed that the new bodies might eventually be empowered to award "quasi-degrees".[2] During the autumn of that year he began arranging for his clients and supporters in the north and midlands to send memorials to Cambridge asking for an official provision of external teaching. It was clear that many of the bodies that petitioned had a lively interest in the proper academic recognition of any work done, and anticipating that

Cambridge would soon set up an executive syndicate, or committee. Stuart predicted that one of its most urgent pieces of business would be the weighty question of the affiliation of outlying bodies to the University. In the spring of 1872 he seems to have been drafting a scheme that would give to anyone who had gone through a course at a local college the right to sit any Cambridge examination and to "take his place such as he could win" along with the internal students. This privilege would, he believed, offer the colleges when they came into being a definite aim and would give the University a great influence over their development.[3] Indeed one of the memorials asked for "the conferring of some degree" on successful students, and argued that the concession was vital to the scheme's prosperity.[4]

In setting up the Local Lectures in 1873 Cambridge did take a step of some political significance, but it was clearly not prepared to confront the large issue of access to university privileges. The towns were offered courses piecemeal and not the systematic curricula for which some of them had asked; the caution, in such a tentative enterprise, was understandable, but it also meant that Cambridge was able to avoid for the time being the difficult question of academic concessions. A certificate was instituted to mark successful completion of a course of twelve meetings, the associated private study and the examination; the award, however, was of no known value. The consequences of this tactical evasion were evident from the start. Moore Ede, Cambridge's superintendent lecturer in the east midlands, reporting on the work of Michaelmas term 1874, regretted the lack of a real academic inducement; it was important, especially where young men of the middle classes were concerned, to offer something of practical value. Cambridge should award an "Associateship" to successful students at external centres; holders of this award should be excused from the Previous Examination and from one year of the residence requirement for the B.A. degree. Affiliated provincial colleges, having the right to prepare candidates for the associateship, would garner the prestige and drawing power that they needed, and the sons of the commercial classes would patronise them in the way that their social superiors patronised the old universities. Success would breed success and Extension work would be generally consolidated.[5]

Ede's report is an important document of the early Lectures movement. It was impressively far-sighted and one wonders how it could have been

written by a man with only two terms' experience. Most likely Ede acted as a mouthpiece for Stuart, and one of Stuart's priorities was to keep alive the affiliation issue, on which little progress had been possible as yet.

The demand for affiliation was one expression of the founder's great talent for taking scraps of existing policy and practice and binding them together in his distinctive fashion to make the plan of the peripatetic university. There was nothing original about the idea, which had been under discussion at Oxford since the middle of the previous decade. It is too easy an answer to trace University Extension in its final sense to a unique concurrence of events and personalities in Cambridge of the early 1870s; that University certainly made the first gestures in practice but it had no monopoly of the theory.

About 1871, when the Extension scheme was beginning to take shape, Stuart called on Benjamin Jowett, the renowned Master of Balliol, and through him met some of the Oxford reform party. And one of the important events of this date was Jowett's conversion after initial opposition to the idea of extending the universities through satellite provincial colleges.[6] On the prompting of John Percival, then headmaster of Clifton school, Balliol became involved in promoting a university college for Bristol; word went around Oxford that the sponsors intended to ask for special concessions for Bristol students who wanted to proceed to the University's degrees. Affiliation remained a live issue throughout the 1870s. King's College, London petitioned for a special relationship with Oxford in a move to escape the tyranny of the London University examinations; Owens College, Manchester tried the same tactic, but on discovering how slow Oxford was to respond decided to make a bid for chartered independence.

The affiliation question really came to life in Cambridge during 1878 when the promoters of local colleges at Nottingham and Sheffield asked for recognition from the two old universities. A report outlining a suitable general statute was accepted by Cambridge in the year following; after a rather long delay the power to admit "any College or Institution" to affiliated status was properly confirmed. Oxford also debated in 1879 and at last managed to approve an affiliation statute, which actually came into effect a little earlier than Cambridge's.

As far as Oxford was concerned affiliation provided authority for the award of an "Associateship" to students of approved external institutions. The Cambridge affiliation Certificate conceded rather more, and holders

had the right on certain conditions to enter the University and take the examinations for the Bachelor's degree after two years' residence. It must have been obvious that few products of the local colleges would be able to make their way to Oxbridge, and affiliation was supposed to be worth something in itself. Given the remoteness of the London examination system and the intense hostility in some quarters to any spread of degree-granting powers, affiliation was naturally an option worth considering. During the early 1880s St David's (Lampeter), Nottingham and Sheffield affiliated to one or both of the old universities.

It was a muddled policy and the junior partners knew it from the beginning. Take for example the problem of the higher education of women, which was an important source of energy to both the local college and the Extension movements. Women were admitted to London degrees by a supplemental charter of 1878, but affiliation could offer nothing comparable since Oxford and Cambridge still refused to admit female candidates to the B.A. examinations, let alone to the degree. In 1880 an agitation was got up outside Cambridge to persuade that University to admit women to both privileges. In the usual fashion the different parties began to present their memorials, and among them appeared one from the local college at Nottingham. It was planning to take advantage of the promised affiliation statute and hoped that its men and women students might benefit equally; but that could not be unless female holders of the Affiliation Certificate could go up to Cambridge, take the examinations and be awarded the degree. The college petitioned accordingly.

The temporary syndicate appointed to make recommendations managed in its report to avoid the degree issue altogether, dealing simply with the formal admission of properly qualified women to the tripos examinations. At the usual preliminary public discussion a number of speakers objected to the proposed residence requirement for female examinees: why not open the examinations to women no matter where they lived and studied? That was a typically "extensionist" ploy. Although Stuart was a member of the Nottingham board of management and took an active part in the discussions, it is not clear whether he and his party were responsible for the nonresidence suggestion. It was of course an alarming suggestion to which most of the M.A.s were opposed; they pointed out that men might well come to demand the same concession once it was offered to the women.[8]

It is plain that Nottingham took its affiliation in 1883 in the conviction that it was not being given much and that better things ought to follow. Only a year later the honorary secretary to the Nottingham college (who was also the town clerk) described to a national conference on education some of the drawbacks; his address provides a conveniently full account of affairs as they then stood. The decision to affiliate had been taken by only a small majority, and although the governors had no sympathy with the demand for new degree-granting powers they felt that Cambridge was being far from generous. Their hesitations had been confirmed already: "The certificate on completing a college course is not greatly valued. The opportunity of taking a degree in honours after a residence of two academical years is a very meagre boon". The present arrangement was to be condemned as a "half-and-half affiliation" which could be accepted as "only the promise of better things to come". The universities must throw open their degrees to the main body of students in the local colleges. It a candidate followed a full course of study in any institution fit to be affiliated he would acquire enough "culture and intelligence" to be entitled "to take his place in all the examinations of the University, without any distinction between him and those students who have resided". Surely that was more than a chance echo of Stuart's words of twelve years before.

Affiliation in the full sense, it was pointed out, would do away with the need for the colleges to seek the power to grant degrees of their own. No-one was more aware than the Nottingham governing body of "the mischief that must arise from increasing the number of bodies granting degrees"; still the local colleges could not be expected to stand idly by if the universities refused to make meaningful concessions.[9] In fact Nottingham was to get nothing more from her academic patrons and settled for the London degree machine.

By the middle of the 1880s this argument was anyway of little concern to the champions of a genuinely open higher education. A number of significant changes had already taken place in the character of Extension, of the local colleges and in the relationship between the two movements.

Although the colleges are usually cited as only one party in the complex alliance that brought Extension into existence, R. D. Roberts, the one most important and experienced figure in its professional administration, believed that in the early days the connection had been of the greatest significance. Roberts went into Extension in 1875; looking back in 1908

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he wrote of the college and the lectures movements: "in the minds of the pioneers of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, these two ideals were more or less fused together and undistinguishable".[10] The fusion was older than that; the "college" ideal occupied a central place in the thinking of the Christian Socialists of the mid-century, they were the earliest of the missionary dons and their doctrines were one of the important influences on the later Extension movement.

In 1842 a "People's College" had been founded in Sheffield in a benevolent attempt to provide for working people a more elevated and liberal education than could be had from any of the existing institutions. It was not a success but it nevertheless provided a model for the Christian Socialists when their experiments in workers' cooperation proved disappointing and interest shifted increasingly towards educational work. The famed and durable London Working Men's College was opened by them in 1854 with F. D. Maurice as its principal. He brought to it all his commitment to working-class adult education, and a veneration for the community of teachers and students that he believed to be the soul of the Oxford and Cambridge colleges. Maurice held that his own College should offer its students everything that the universities' colleges offered theirs: in one of the lectures he gave to mark its foundation he spoke of the just claims of provincial colleges on behalf of poor men and for access to degrees.[11] He hoped that the Working Men's College might achieve equal recognition with intramural colleges, that is, that its certificates of study might be accepted by the universities as qualifying a man to take the final examinations and proceed to the B.A. degree.[12]

When, a decade later, the Oxford liberal party made its first determined bid to convert the University to the idea of affiliation of provincial colleges the phrase "high adult education" was used; what was intended however was that these new institutions should feed the University with a new type of student. The reformers sought a route to graduation for men of the middle classes who could not afford the time and expense to go through the complete resident degree course.[13] Jowett, when he took up the cause, widened the discussion considerably and allowed a wider function to provincial colleges. Speaking at Bristol in 1874 he said that the institution proposed for that city was intended "for those who wish to pursue their studies beyond the ordinary school age"; he interpreted the formula as applying to two distinct classes of people. There would be regular students who could not afford to attend a

university but who could carry on their education at home; then there would be "those who could only carry on their studies by the use of the few hours which they could spare early in the morning or late at night, while they were at the same time earning their livelihood". Many of the large cities had thousands of people in the second category and "Was it not almost denying a man bread to deny him knowledge, if he had the wish for it?"[14]

It was against this background that Stuart's ideas took shape. He could assume a point of view from which provincial colleges were seen as popular and accessible agencies of adult education, and not merely as incipient professional training centres for young men recently out of school. On the other hand, as early as 1872 he noted down his reservations about the local college movement. It would leave untouched the problem of reaching the masses; colleges would inevitably favour the middle classes and would be accessible only to those working people who happened to live close by.[15] What he did not foresee was that the internal dynamics of the new institutions would prove entirely unfavourable to his concept of University Extension. In later years Roberts was to complain frequently that these places had simply shed their wider responsibilities:

> It is something other than University Extension work that these Colleges have done and are doing, and it is to a great extent for a different class of students that they provide. The Local College is conceived of as in the main a place where students of the usual University age should work for regular University degrees . . . The evening work for adult students already engaged in the various occupations of life has been regarded as purely subordinate and comparatively unimportant.[16]

He might more accurately have said that the "adult student" was almost totally neglected. When the Yorkshire College at Leeds established professorships in arts subjects Cambridge agreed to withdraw its Local Lectures provision from the immediate vicinity, but the College did nothing to make good the loss. When the Extension movement in Liverpool gave way in favour of a campaign for a permanent local college the result was that more general opportunities for higher study became extinct and were not revived until the end of the century.

Edward Carpenter, one of Cambridge's earliest lecturers in the north

of England, saw the process from close quarters. Some years later, at his first meeting with Carpenter, Henry Nevinson was given the explanation of what went wrong; Nevinson wrote in his diary: "Talked about the U.E.S. in the North, how some 'swells' get hold of it, build a college, leave the people no voice in the choice of lectures, etc., and so the thing dies".[17]

The local colleges felt the urge to become universities. Although the Extension lobby in its early and confused enthusiasm no doubt overestimated their potential as agencies of popular higher education, there did take place a process known in our own day as "institutional drift". It is never described in those terms by the celebratory historians of the modern universities; yet in the glorious progress to full chartered status something was surely lost.

Ironically the creation of the local colleges had an immediately damaging effect on the practice of University Extension. They drew with them energy and money that had previously bolstered up a vaguer and more inclusive interest in the education of adults. Adverse economic conditions in the country and the waning of novelty were also factors in the decline of Extension and the departure of the local colleges intensified the recession.

By the end of the 1870s the Extension movement was threatened with total collapse. The Cambridge work had fallen to little more than a third of what it had been at the peak of the early years; the Oxford office was quite dormant. A sudden, dramatic revival was on its way, but the circumstances of the new popularity were different and a decisive clarification of the character of University Extension was to take place.

The university of the busy

These problems had been predicted. In 1878 Joshua Fitch, a leading educationist, published in the *Nineteenth Century* an article called "University work in great towns"; it was mainly an attack on the lethargy of Oxbridge and on the demand of Owens College for independence from London University, but it found space for a striking commentary on the Extension scheme. The various forces that had provided the energy for the initial Cambridge experiment were now separating themselves, Fitch suggested, and in consequence the movement was splitting apart. It had prospered in places where there was a strong demand for a local college,

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and that was the kind of success that made itself redundant. There were two large problems for the future: first to ensure the balanced development of centres where "quasi-collegiate instruction" was proving viable, and secondly to preserve opportunities for serious study in "places too small or poor to found provincial colleges".[18] It was a prescient analysis.

As Fitch wrote, the lectures movement was entering its doldrums. In 1882/3 the revival began. For reasons still unexplained the public, and particularly certain parts of the working-class public, found a new interest in university teaching. The reconstructed Cambridge system also owed a great deal to the energy and dedication of R. D. Roberts, who had recently been appointed to a secretaryship with special responsibility for the Local Lectures work. There were stirrings at Oxford; Arthur Acland, the hitherto inactive secretary for Extension, was throwing himself into the educational work of the cooperative movement and along with Jowett and Percival he was hatching a plan to revive the University's external provision.

As these pieces fitted into place the picture turned out to be subtly different from the old one. There were no consortia of local associations demanding systematic schemes of work on which to build a permanent institute of higher education. The initiative had passed to a large number of dissociated voluntary committees located anywhere between Tyne and Tamar. They were eager but impoverished and they accepted their poverty as a fact of life; the height of ambition was to be able to sponsor a couple of self-contained terminal courses each winter. Extension was stuck with the second problem that Fitch had identified. In the Cambridge branch optimism was tempered by the knowledge that the rather desultory provision of lectures fell short of what a university agency ought to be doing. The democratic ideal of open access to the best that could be provided and the academic ideal of thoroughness both seemed to point to the same conclusion — the need for worthwhile incentives.

A speaker at the Social Science Congress of 1883 believed that the Extension system showed promise and should be taken seriously. The Cambridge Local Lectures centres scattered about the country provided the basis of a permanent system for the continued education of young people after their school years, if only those centres could acquire recognition. An Extension award was already on offer but "unfortunately no means exist for giving value to the certificate, and much disappointment at this had been expressed by those who have worked for it".[19]

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The answer was for Extension courses to be adapted to the requirements of the London examinations.

In theory the University of London already provided an open system of access to degrees, but in practice it was one that elicited far less than universal admiration. Many considered it to be no better than an examining board, rigid and remote, scarcely a thing to foster a university education. The Extenders were imbued with Stuart's doctrine that teaching was a "divine and beautiful thing";[20] to their way of thinking the vice of the London method was the tearing apart of examination and teaching to the great detriment of the latter. Without the inspection of teaching the external examination was a recipe for cramming. And then the rigidity of the London regulations was at odds with the needs of older students who might have little or no secondary education and who could give only a part of each week to study.

By 1884 the leaders of University Extension were prepared to offer an almost unspeakable alternative. Access to degrees must be made the apex of an enlarged and systematised version of their own scheme, the peripatetic lecture courses and associated paraphernalia of teaching and private study. The English people could be induced to sacrifice time and money to strenuous self-improvement if the universities would only recognise their efforts by throwing open, without regard to age, circumstances or class, the ultimate distinction. Our visionaries asked in fact for a part-time, nonresident teaching university operating a system of academic credits. At one stroke they would bring the Extension movement into its inheritance and the people into theirs. As I shall try to show, this policy with its peculiar blend of inward- and outward-looking concerns was deeply ambiguous. Yet, taking it for the moment on its own terms, it was a compelling piece of effrontery and generosity.

When this open university was first conceived I have not been able to discover, but it seems that it was first hinted at in public in 1884. In that year London was the venue of a great International Health Exhibition. Amid the attractions of scientific drainage schemes, model artisans' dwellings, personal anthropometric examination by the methods of Francis Galton and the nutritional analysis of fermented beverages the organisers found room for a Conference on Education which attracted national and international interest. Three representatives of the Extension movement secured invitations to read papers: Roberts himself, E. T. Cook (secretary to the London Society), and Albert Grey, M.P. (a member of

Council of the Society). They addressed the conference separately but in obviously prearranged harmony.[21] Their purpose was propagandist: to show that Extension had already proved its significance to "national education" and was entitled to public recognition, especially in the shape of government grants-in-aid. Roberts also grasped the opportunity of arguing that the movement was now well enough established to offer adult students outside the universities a complete university education.

His theme was "the requirements of a truly national system of higher education". When students inside colleges and universities were such an insignificantly small proportion of their age group, and when so few people could afford to give up three or four years of life exclusively to study, what was to be done? The answer lay in the further development of University Extension, a system capable of bringing higher education within the grasp of anyone capable of profiting by it. A more systematic curriculum could be organised, extending over several years and providing "what might fairly be called a liberal education in Humanity, Science and Art"; and according to Roberts' logic those who completed it should receive "some University recognition, such as a degree".

A young person obliged to work for his living could attend two evening courses a week and spend the same amount of time in private study on the remaining evenings. In eight or ten years a wide range of subjects would be covered and tested by examination as they were completed:

> At the age of twenty-one to twenty-five the student would find himself not only master of his trade or craft, but also with a liberal education, equal as far as range of subjects and thoroughness of study is concerned to the education he might have obtained during three years spent at the University.[22]

Was Roberts concerned with anything that can properly be called adult education? Whatever the legality of coming of age adulthood began early for most people in those days. An elementary education was soon finished and there were few opportunities for secondary schooling. Colleges admitted their students young and were compelled to give them a sixth-form as well as a higher education (Roberts himself entered University College to study for the London B.Sc. at sixteen years of age). It was known that serious study in the Extension centres was favoured by the younger section of the audience, but these people had already been jettisoned from the formal education system and had taken up

membership of the great excluded. And what places Roberts most definitely in the main stream of adult educational thought is his insistence then and always that the means of personal cultivation must be made freely available to grown and responsible people who continued to discharge all their everyday responsibilities.

So much was generally acceptable within the Extension world, but to open the degree to all-comers was, some feared, to press the claims of self-improvement too far and in the wrong direction. Edward Cook's address to the conference made no direct reference to his colleague's radical ambition, but it gave a glimpse of the opposition that was to come. Extending the universities' teaching was not the same as extending the education they offered, Cook insisted: "All that an Englishman means by a University can hardly be understood except by those who happen to have been at Oxford or Cambridge themselves"; the unique atmosphere and benefit could not be "reproduced in a hundred different local centres or extended along an indefinite line".[23] (In fact oxonolatry by no means blinded Cook to the need for reform. In later years when he was a rather more important person he gave full support to the Society's demand that Extension students in the capital should be admitted to the degrees of a reformed University of London. He takes part therefore in the action of a later chapter.)

Fortunately Roberts had an ally elsewhere. The support of R. G. Moulton probably gave more encouragement than the backing of half a dozen men of ordinary talent. Moulton joined the Cambridge Extension the year before Roberts, and was reputed to have been the first person to identify Extension teaching as a "life-work" in itself; he acquired distinction as a literary theorist and great reputation as a lecturer and expositor. Although these two men were so closely associated with Cambridge they were not "Cambridge men"; willingness to cut through most of the pieties set them apart.

Robert Davies Roberts came from generations of Welsh Calvinist Methodists and retained a life-long involvement in Welsh cultural and public affairs. He studied in London before winning an open sholarship to Clare College; early Extension lecturing was interspersed with a brief appointment at the recently established university college of Aberystwyth and research for the London D.Sc. His first post as an administrator was at the Cambridge Syndicate for Local Lectures and Examinations, to which he also added a fellowship of Clare and University lectureship in

geology. In 1885, having decided to give up what might have been a brilliant career as a scientist, he devoted himself entirely to adult education, assuming in addition to his Cambridge work the secretaryship to the London Society. Although he was to spend half his official life at the Cambridge office he seems to have been more at home with the adventurous spirits who gathered in the Society and away from the cloistered atmosphere. Roberts was a political and cultural democrat who drew no line between spiritual and educational strivings.[24] In one personality were found the visionary enthusiast and the rather dourly systematic administrator.

Richard Green Moulton brought vision and system together with more colourful results. Michael Sadler (who became Oxford's new Extension secretary in 1885) was a schoolboy when he first heard Moulton; long years afterwards he recalled the impression the man made: "He was infectious, radiant, magnetic. He was part preacher, part actor, part troubadour".[25] He was the son of a Wesleyan minister; one of his brothers became a missionary and he thought at times of entering the ministry himself. Just as explicitly as Roberts he identified his religious convictions with adult education, a movement which he hoped would become a model of intellectual fellowship and equality. He too had experience of the grimmer side of higher education; between his sixteenth and twentieth years he worked as an usher and assistant in private schools, studying for the London B.A., before winning the scholarship that took him to Cambridge.

Above all Moulton was an educational theorist in a degree that only Roberts seems to have approached. The Extenders were strong on general principles and spoke on the least provocation of how liberal studies would redeem a divided and philistine England; Moulton was no exception, but he added something distinctively his own, the advocacy of what I can characterise only in a piece of modern jargon as "curriculum development". When he spoke and wrote of "the reorganisation of liberal education" and "the university of the future" his millenary enthusiasm was stiffened with a close attention to scholastic detail. His interests were already formed during his earliest years as an Extension lecturer, when he had set himself the huge ambition of writing "foundation books" on the interconnections of literature, history, science and education. (He did not get much beyond literature.) By 1884 he had come round to the view that the reform of liberal studies and the Extension system were aspects

of a single process.[26]

A few months after Roberts had first hinted at an open degree Moulton wrote a memorandum on the subject for the benefit of the Cambridge office. He suggested that if Oxford and Cambridge were to discharge the promise implicit in their decision to extend themselves they must work towards providing in all parts of the country a scheme of liberal education "brought up to completeness implied in the granting of degrees". He sketched an elaborate plan to make use of the existing machinery of affiliated local colleges, Extension lectures and Local Examinations. As a matter of principle an Extension degree would have to be distinguished from one awarded after residence; perhaps the M.A. could be reserved to those who had been at the University. Then came the anticlimax; presumably with an eye to Cambridge realities Moulton concluded that "Such a degree scheme is too wide a question to be offered for discussion at present".[27]

Unable to restrain himself he soon expanded the memorandum into a leaflet for private circulation (in which Roberts' collaboration was acknowledged), and about the same time (1886) he distributed a typically vigorous and unorthodox "educational speculation" on *The University of the Future*. A year later Roberts reworked his Health Exhibition address into a pamphlet; published in Aberystwyth it avoided any direct reference to official Cambridge policy, and it was indeed directed towards Welsh as much as English problems.[28]

In 1888 Roberts persuaded the London Society to adopt his and Moulton's ideas as its own policy. The royal commission then investigating the need for a teaching university was asked to give the Extension system a large place in its recommendations, to create in fact an open university for the capital. In the same year Roberts began to bombard the sponsors of a university for Wales with similar proposals. These practical endeavours are the subject of Chapter 3.

Moulton had no part in them, and when his own career took him to North America he was no longer available for future actions. Nevertheless he made full use of his first American tour of 1890/1 to advertise his theories. (The wider diffusion of Moulton's ideas seems to have been a consequence of his first visit to the United States. Converted into addresses to a receptive public they were immediately printed and reprinted in leading periodicals and by various voluntary, university and government agencies. In that form they were to come back across the

Atlantic and win a little overdue attention at home.)

It was Moulton who provided the fullest and most vivacious account of the theory of the open university, in his obscure Cambridge papers of 1886 and these better-known pieces of four years later.[29] He refused to accept University Extension as the scraps from the educated man's table dished out to the deserving deprived, it was nothing less than "University Education for the Whole Nation organized upon Itinerant Lines". To a growing demand for advanced study the usual response in England was an argument about whether or not new universities should be founded. This to Moulton was wide of the point:

> It may or may not be desirable on other grounds to multiply universities; but there is no necessity for it on grounds of popular education, the itinerancy being a sufficient means of bringing any university into touch with the people as a whole.

Ordinary universities could meet the needs of those who had time to spare in their early adult life, and "University Extension is to be the university of the busy".

Moulton also made a revealing attack on conventional images of the university. Some places enthroned scholarship and produced a small number of distinguished learned men, "but with a terrible waste of raw materials". Others worshipped research, and institutionalised research was, he believed, a disintegrating force that led to a "perpetual narrowing of human sympathies in the intellectual leaders of mankind". All this gave evidence of intellectual overproduction; a revitalisation of distribution was called for, and the Extension movement was of course ready and waiting. With some hesitations about the residence problem Moulton moved towards the conclusion that Extension students must be given access to the regular degrees of universities.

The methods employed by that movement had virtues of their own and the established academic world would do well to take note. Like many thoughtful people of his day Moulton was distressed by the tightening grip of examination and by the damage that it was thought to be doing to teaching. Degrees had become confused with vocational licences, for doctors, lawyers and especially schoolmasters, and the great need was to recapture the undergraduate curriculum for teaching. Extension was the shining example of a system in which everything was subordinated to teaching. Its examinations were based on syllabuses freely

offered by the lecturers, and not the other way round; they were able to give credit for work done during a course; they were an assessment of the lecturers' skill and the students' willing response and not an obstacle course for which people had to be specifically trained. Moulton explained to an American audience that he had little respect for examination as such: "if you knew as much as I do of examinations, you would not have much belief in them. However, people in England have a belief in them, unfortunately".

The principles of University Extension provided then the key to the reform of all liberal education, the claim was as large as that. There is a surprising modernity in Moulton's scheme for devising an external curriculum worthy of university recognition. The method he proposed was to take an existing criterion, the Cambridge Pass B.A. say, calculate the amount of time and effort needed to satisfy it, and then see how the work could be redistributed in an entirely new timetable. The Extension method suggested the basis of a dispersed university education — study units of twelve weeks capable of being compounded into an extended and coherent curriculum. And again one senses that Moulton was a man before his time when he argued that "a fundamental error of the present system is the requirement of *identical study and examinations* from all taking the same degree, instead of applying *a common standard of examination* to a variety of subjects".

Above all he pleaded for "elasticity", questioning the wisdom of increasing the numbers of universities and along with them the opportunities for rigidity. "The true policy is: not to multiply the degree-giving bodies, introducing confusions and impairing the value of degrees (e.g. their antiquity): but, to introduce elasticity into the machinery of testing for degrees". Courses could be provided by a wide range of agencies; the existing universities could control the quality of teaching by scrutiny of syllabuses, and could award their existing degrees on the recommendation of a board of examiners nominated by all those taking part in the scheme.

There one finds an imaginative contribution to the theory of academical reform; the essential point was that the "university" should be identified with teaching of a proper standard and not with fixed institutions carrying the label of higher education. Moulton once provocatively announced: "University education, as I understand it, has nothing to do with universities. I mean that university education has no necessary connection with

universities", and he cited the existence of a voluntary society to extend university teaching in London as proof of his point. It could have been added that he himself was a distinguished scholar and a revered teacher who, up to the time at which the words were said, had never held a post within any university.

If teaching of the right quality was available — "through whatever institutions might be found desirable" — it should be recognised as part of the route to academic distinctions. Moulton's University of the Future would "not be a chartered body like existing universities, but a floating aggregation of voluntary agencies: not so much *organized* as *tending to co-operate*". Around the periphery there would be a multitude of local bodies associating themselves for purposes of supervision with central and permanent institutions such as universities, local colleges, the Extension offices and government departments. (Was this another anticipation, this time of the "open systems" of our modern organisational theorists?) Such an arrangement, Moulton believed, was entirely conformable to the English talent for self-help and to its achievements during the nineteenth century: "it remains to crown this work with the application of the voluntary system to liberal education". Whoever invented the idea, Moulton, Roberts or someone else, "recognition of teaching" became a cornerstone of the policy of open degrees.

That policy emerged partly in response to the pressing domestic problems of the Extension system, but it would never have been written and advocated unless its authors had been fired with a higher purpose. During a visit to Philadelphia in 1893 Roberts gave an address on the subject of "Aims, expectations, and university credits". The title reflected the dual character of which his acquaintances were so aware, the visionary and the stickler for detail. At the end of this chapter it is the aims that are of most concern: social conditions were changing, Roberts reminded his audience, and academic methods must adapt themselves; the extension of political privilege must be matched by a similar extension of educational privilege. "The democratic spirit demands an equality of intellectual opportunity".[30]

Seemingly America reinvigorated visiting British adult educationists and brought their optimism into full flower. Three years earlier in the same city Moulton had spoken of

> several of us who are resolved never to cease until we have brought it about that a complete degree course, equal in every way to the course

> given in the universities, but administered in University Extension methods, shall be obtainable by University Extension students, no doubt extending over a long term of years, but obtainable by them through the system of University Extension.[31]

The question is inevitably what did these several men do and what did they achieve?

3

Suggested outline of a charter

In 1886 Cambridge University was persuaded to extend the privilege of affiliation to voluntary lecture centres that were not formally constituted places of higher education. According to R. D. Roberts the enlarged statute had two purposes: to induce the centres to adopt better organised schemes of study by offering "some easily understood University privilege", and thus to give the lecturing staff greater security and predictability in their work. B. F. Westcott, the Regius Professor of Divinity and a good friend of the Extension movement, welcomed this "distinct epoch in the history of higher education"; Cambridge had seized the opportunity of extending its influence over the life of the nation,[1] and (one might add) at no great cost to itself.

Speaking at Philadelphia in 1893 Roberts denied that he had ever expected much of the Affiliation Certificate as a means of prising open the University — it was the lift to the dignity of the local centres that mattered. Cambridge had now gone as far as could realistically be expected and reformers must look to newer institutions. It was not the existing English or Welsh provincial colleges that he had in mind; great things had been expected of them in the early days of University Extension but:

> The results, however, have proved these views to be entirely mistaken. The local colleges which came into existence between 1870 and 1890 proved to be moulded too much in accordance with the views and precedents of the past. The colleges unwisely, as I think, endeavoured to walk in the footsteps of those of an earlier date, and instead of providing mainly for the needs of evening students, the colleges gave their attention unduly to their few day students.[2]

Roberts did not care to explain that he had suffered a hard personal defeat in the recent negotiations to establish a university for Wales. He did hint however that something better might emerge when the proposed teaching university for London came into existence, and indeed he had been directing his attentions towards that elusive institution for the last five years or so.

As it happened Richard Moulton was to play no further part in affairs in England. During the session 1890/1 he went to the United States on a private visit; it turned into a propaganda tour on behalf of University Extension in North America, and Moulton seems to have been genuinely surprised at the ready welcome given to his educational theories and at the adulation heaped upon himself as an exponent of them. He was accepted as an "authority" in a way that could not have happened in the English academic establishment.[3]

At the end of his tour he contracted to spend 1892/3 at Chicago, helping the new university of that name to set up an Extension department, and late in 1893 he went back to America for what was to be the rest of his working life. In earlier years, despite his exuberant speculations, Moulton had never suggested that very dramatic or speedy concessions could be expected from Cambridge. Chicago offered him a much more promising ground on which to cultivate the reform of liberal education.

Similarly Roberts made use of other opportunities. He came from Aberystwyth and since 1876 had been closely connected with the University College there, first as a temporary lecturer and member of Senate, and then as an aggressive advocate of its claims to public recognition. When, in the late 1880s the agitation for a Welsh university revived he saw a bigger opportunity and began to campaign for a large-scale extension of degree-bearing courses. It was in London however that his ideas and proposals were most quickly developed and first began to attract interest.

In 1885 he was asked to take on the secretaryship of the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching, and he held the post for the next ten years. Under his guidance the work of the L.S.E.U.T. expanded rapidly, and Roberts' personal influence with it. In London adult education was not compelled to go cap in hand to academic vested interests. The Society was a voluntary body, governed by its own Council and incorporated under the Companies Act, an arrangement made necessary by the fact that London University did not itself provide teaching. The academic standing of the work was guaranteed by a Universities Joint Board composed of representatives of the three universities and charged with overseeing syllabuses, appointment of lecturers and so on; the Board was required to enforce the standards but not the prejudices of the scholarly world. James Stuart acted as its

chairman for many years. The Council itself included a strong radical and progressive Liberal representation, for example Lyulph Stanley, E. T. Cook, Alfred Milner, Albert Grey and Samuel Barnett. With support of that kind Roberts was able to lead the Society in an energetic bid to change the whole character of higher education in London.

The history of the University of London is tangled, and some of the threads must be teased out in order to explain why the L.S.E.U.T. was able to make, and win a hearing for large claims on behalf of "extramural" education. The very confusions of academic policy in the capital gave the champions of the floating university scope to make their case.

Whatever London University was supposed to have been the revised charter of 1858 turned it into a purely examining body. As time went by the two leading colleges in London, University and King's, came increasingly to resent their academic subordination to a university that gave them no place in its government; during the 1880s there was even talk of breaking away and joining the new federal Victoria University. It was in fact the rise of the provincial colleges that persuaded University and King's that their future depended on having the right to confer degrees directly. The problems of legal and medical education, although of no relevance to the present theme, were of great importance in tipping the scales of unrest.[4]

An association "for promoting a Teaching University for London" was set up in 1884, by an odd coincidence as a result of the same conference at which the proposal to open degrees to Extension students had first been aired. The association was favourably received by the existing University, which began to consider a number of schemes of self-reform. The great difficulty was to acknowledge the claims of the metropolitan colleges and their teaching staffs within a constitution that retained imperial functions in examining.

While London debated with itself the opposition lost patience. The Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons petitioned the Crown for a charter that would have turned them in effect into an independent medical university. University and King's also petitioned in 1887, putting forward the draft charter of an "Albert University", a teaching institution to be quite separate from the University of London and in which they were to be the "charter colleges". Both petitions were energetically contested and early in 1888 a Royal Commission was appointed under the chair-

manship of Lord Selborne to make recommendations.

The public disquiet served to bring a more general question into focus. It was not simply that medical education needed to be reorganised, or that University and King's ought to have more control of their undergraduates' curriculum: it was also a matter of the rapidly growing demand for higher education throughout the central and suburban areas and of the inability of existing bodies to coordinate themselves and satisfy the demand. The London Society suddenly realised that it could claim to be an important voice in this dispute; Council resolved to put evidence to the royal commission and almost overnight began to propagate an ambitious idea of the place of Extension in a future teaching university.[5]

Roberts was behind it all and the radical notions that he and Moulton had been discussing for the last few years were quickly translated into a plan bearing directly on conditions in the capital. The opportunity was all the more attractive on account of the depressing situation in Cambridge, where Roberts still held the job of secretary for Local Lectures. The enlarged Affiliation scheme was in operation but the University was in no mood for new concessions, as the painful progress of women's education showed.

Since 1881 students of Girton and Newnham had been admitted officially to the tripos examinations. The price they paid was the shelving of the even more touchy question of access to degrees. That was not taken up again until 1887, when a Girton woman achieved fame by being the only person to be given a first in the Classical Tripos. Even some of the convinced supporters of the women's claims believed that it was not yet time to raise the degree question, but raised it was. The authorities managed to cut the matter short by pointing out that of the M.A.s who had troubled to sign the various memorials on the subject the majority were opposed to change.[6] The tribulations of Girton and Newnham had no direct connection with the affairs of the University Extension movement, but these events provided a kind of barometric reading, and the prospects for any further adventures in Extension provision were not at all fair.

So Roberts would have to pursue his ambitions elsewhere. A few months after the royal commission had been appointed he sent an article to the *Journal of Education* in which he applauded the opposition to the Albert University. It was right to point to the growing demand for higher education, and it was right to deplore the obstacles in the way of the

many institutions in London that could contribute to an enlarged system of university teaching; but the scope for reform was even wider:

> There is not only a demand for the development of University education, but a demand that comes from a new class of students seeking the advantages of a liberal education — a class of persons practically excluded hitherto from University training — namely, adults engaged in various occupations who desire a broad higher education, but whose study must necessarily be carried on during the evening.[7]

The needs of this new class of student were very different from those of the familiar recruits to higher education, and the familiar methods of academic organisation no longer sufficed. Roberts suggested that a new university for London could rise to its opportunities only if it were given a bilateral constitution, with a conventionally administered department for day students, and for evening students a department planned on entirely novel lines. The "evening" system should be a development of Extension, brought to completeness by the award of regular university degrees. Provision should be peripatetic and widely diffused, with its own special staff. The ruling principle ought to be the "recognition of organised University teaching, rather than of certain permanent institutions of University rank". The lecturers should be appointed by the University directly and their courses recognised, no matter where they were given, as part of the undergraduate curriculum.

If the University were to be thrown open its regulations had to take account of the particular needs of "busy adults". The new type of student could not be expected to take his examinations at a single sitting or according to a rigid timetable. Systematic Extension courses could easily be arranged to cover most of the requirements of the three stages of the conventional Bachelor's course; students could complete the work at a particular level as they found personally convenient and

> presenting a certificate of having attended each course, satisfied the lecturer in the weekly work, and satisfied the examiner in the examination, would be credited with that section of the Preliminary Examination . . . . In like manner the work of the Intermediate and Final years might de dealt with.[8]

There was just one necessary reservation. The facilities of many of the local lecture centres were limited, and so it would be useful to designate

a central institution for evening work, at which candidates for degrees could obtain their more advanced instruction, and laboratory practice in the science subjects.

Although Roberts wrote that students might be credited with parts of a larger examination he seems not to have used the noun "credit" in his speeches and articles in this country. But he certainly talked of credits in his Philadelphia address of 1893, and there is no doubt that he envisaged a thoroughly modular system of higher education in which final examinations had little part.

Three days after the article was published the London Society's spokesmen appeared before the Selborne Commission. What they had to say showed that Roberts' speculations had already become settled policy; their evidence was imaginative and bold, and cut across the grain of ordinary discussion. That never-failing friend of University Extension, the Marquis of Ripon, appeared first to speak in the absence of G. J. Goschen, the Society's president. Mindful of the worst knot they had to untie the commissioners tried to extract his lordship's opinion on whether there should be one university in London or two. The Society did not really care how the teaching university was provided, he replied, so long as it was, and so long as it gave the fullest possible recognition to Extension study. He then spoke of the great opportunity for offering a complete university education to other than full-time day students; the Cambridge affiliation system showed that Extension work merited academic recognition, and without any abdiction of standards the lecture courses could be turned into "the means of obtaining a degree altogether".[9]

It fell to Roberts to make the case at length. He argued that throughout the country there was a large latent demand for teaching of a university standard, a demand that became impressively visible once facilities were offered; it implied a desire for all the benefits and privileges of a complete university training. A rather dubious argument, but take for the moment the conclusion that Roberts offered:

> We believe that it would be possible to arrange a curriculum of study in such a way that a student working in the evening for a period of six or seven or eight years might cover the same ground which a student during three years at the university can cover, doing the work quite as thoroughly, only that it would have to be done in sections instead of all at once. The opening up of an opportunity of that kind

> to go through a course of study, which would mean a broad liberal education with the stamp of a degree at the end of it, would be a boon to thousands of young men and young women in London and in the country, and would immensely stimulate the intellectual activity of the country.[10]

The Society's demand for access to degrees was not self-seeking, it was an attempt to change the whole character of higher education. An essential point of the Moulton–Roberts theory was that the university should find its local habitation in recognised teachers and not merely in institutions. If the national university was still in the realm of fantasy at least a modest version of it might be set up in the metropolitan area. University and King's Colleges should be affiliated to a teaching university, which should also be required to provide instruction on its own account and empowered to recognise suitable courses given anywhere in its zone of responsibility. At several points in his evidence Roberts suggested a bilateral structure of permanent colleges for daytime students and a much more informal system, such as Extension, for evening students:

> The teaching would need to be provided not merely in colleges, but in other places all over London where convenient . . . if a teaching university were established and carried on work of this kind for evening students, it would be possible for it to organize and direct all the multifarious educational agencies which are now at work in London. There are a number of minor institutions, like the City of London College, the Birkbeck Institute, the Working Men's College, and others, at some of which courses of lectures in connexion with our society are now being given, and if the university appointed recognised lecturers at different centres all over London for evening students, it might appoint or recognise lecturers at these minor institutions wherever it was suitable, and might in that way control and direct those various organisations which are now scattered and disconnected from one another.[11]

In one sense the Society was part of an alliance of the weak and excluded, but in another sense it was able to speak with some assurance. It could already claim to be doing work of "university rank" (its Joint Board acting as guarantor) and it could carry on no matter what became of the proposed teaching university. Thus the Society believed that it was

in a position to offer something: in exchange for a broad conception of university study in London it was prepared to extinguish itself, and its declared ambition was to merge into a new and inclusive university constitution.[12]

The L.S.E.U.T. was encouraging others to think similarly. Roberts subsequently wrote to the Selborne Commission to point out that his Society was establishing central courses on a systematic plan in association with Gresham College. *The Times* had welcomed the initiative, and Roberts developed that august opinion by suggesting that Gresham, an ancient foundation at a loose end, could play a large part in the education of evening students and should be incorporated in the new university.[13]

The principle of the recognition of teaching was inconsistent with the draft charter of the Albert University, which allowed for the incorporation of only permanent and substantial colleges. Despite the marginal status of the London Society the sponsors of the Albert constitution were alarmed by its proposals and its encouragement of other minor bodies. The reasons for their distress were explained to the Selborne Commission in written evidence from Joshua Fitch, eminent educationist, defender of the existing University and advocate of Extension. He believed that the two major colleges had no interest in the encouragement of higher education; the alternative to the Albert proposals was a wide and generous federal constitution but University and King's would not accept it since their purpose was simply to gain control of a machinery for conferring degrees upon their own students.[14]

Dr Wace, the principal of King's, took the Society's evidence seriously enough to feel a cold draught of competition. He challenged what Roberts had told the commissioners, suggesting that it was a slur on the work that his college had been doing with evening students for over thirty years. Many of these people, he added, had worked over an extended period and had taken the King's associateship in preference to the London degree. The demand for evening study, as estimated by the L.S.E.U.T., could be perefectly well satisfied by the two major colleges and there was no need for any addition to the Albert draft. There was one detail of the Extension case that particularly incensed the Reverend Dr Wace. Roberts had suggested that a developed Extension system for London would have to be staffed by men who gave the larger part of their time to evening students; the college professors who had taken part in the work were too busy to give it their proper attention

and the best teaching was now being given by Oxford and Cambridge men who were professionally committed to the movement. To this the aggrieved principal replied that the Society's practices were an insult to the two colleges; its Joint Board appointed outsiders of no necessary academic authority to be "university teachers" in London, whilst the distinguished staff of University and King's could not claim that title in their own right. To get it they had to throw themselves on the consideration of a mere voluntary association.[15]

That was no momentary flash of rivalry. The two colleges had the right to nominate representatives to the Society's Council, and they were prepared to use their membership for party ends. It is not clear whether the Selborne hearings first brought the rivalry into the open but ill feeling was certainly in evidence during the next few years. In 1891 there was unpleasantness over the organisation of endowment appeals by the Society and the two colleges. The college representatives seem originally to have objected to the Society's issuing an appeal at the same time as their own, and then an attempt at joint action collapsed in misunderstanding. When the Council decided that as a matter of urgency it must begin to raise money Wace was prepared to accuse Goschen of sharp practice and of acting to the disadvantage of the colleges.[16]

The Royal Commission reported in 1889, and although it made no direct reference to the larger ambitions of the adult education lobby its proposals left the way open for continued advocacy. The Selborne report concluded that there should be only one university in London, and that its teaching function should be limited to the capital. The existing University was to be given time to draft and petition for a new charter embodying the commissioners' detailed recommendations. These were directed towards a broad federal solution and emphasised the need to coordinate the work of the many bodies already providing higher education. In "Clause 12" — destined for notoriety — the report referred approvingly to a variety of agencies, the London Society among them, all perforce ploughing their own furrows. On the other hand the Commission was not exactly united. Half its members signed a note explaining that they supported the recommendations only on the assumption that there must be only one university in London; they doubted in fact whether local teaching and universal examining functions could be provided for in a single constitution. The effect was to leave open the very question that the enquiry was supposed to settle.[17]

The Senate of London University immediately began to consider its position. Almost as quickly the Society placed before it a new version of the plan it had put to the Royal Commission. It now proposed that the early stages of university education in London should be provided through an enlarged Extension system and that advanced students should complete their studies at the central colleges. By this means "University teaching could be brought to the very doors of the people".[18]

Senate produced a scheme of its own and there was rejoicing in some quarters that a teaching university was now actually within sight; the plan was rejected by Convocation however and self-reform slipped back below the horizon. Late in 1891 University and King's renewed their petition for the granting of the Albert charter and after provisions for medical education had been added the Privy Council gave its approval. Although the College Charters Act required that the document now lie before both Houses of Parliament for a period, during which either might ask the Queen to withhold her signature, its enemies feared that this particular Albert memorial would be erected.[19] At the same time there was much protest at the way the recommendations of the Royal Commission were being set aside, and in particular at the neglect of the commissioners' suggestion that in case of deadlock they should be recalled.

The Council of the London Society appointed a committee to examine the charter. It reported that since the L.S.E.U.T. already enjoyed university recognition it had nothing to gain from association with the Albert scheme as it stood. The Society should give up its independence only if Extension teaching received proper recognition in the graduation system; failing that it should do all in its power to consolidate the position it already occupied. The committee suggested detailed amendments to the charter, all faithfully echoing what had already been said and written.

The report, presented in mid November, provoked a stormy Council meeting. Edward Cook and Samuel Barnett demanded its publication and also a petition to Parliament protesting against the Albert charter, but they were unable to defeat opposing moves inspired by Professor Ramsey of University College.[20] The December number of the *Journal of Education* noted that a forthcoming conference of the Society was to be asked to demand that the Council send in a petition. The *Journal* had sufficient respect for the Extension lobby to hope that nothing of the kind would be done; the time for amendment was past, the charter

must be accepted or rejected, and rejection would mean "the abandonment of all prospect of a Teaching University for the next ten years at the least". The L.S.E.U.T. should admit that it had missed its chance when the proposals were being examined by the Privy Council.[21] The meeting, of lecturers and local secretaries, took place and deplored the Council's inaction. Council met again and Dr Wace and Sir George Young, who had taken Ramsey's place, did their best to stifle the business; a further meeting at the end of January 1892 decided on a petition and also accepted an invitation to join Birkbeck, the City of London and Working Men's Colleges, and others that had been named in Selborne's Clause 12, to form a united movement of opposition. A collective petition was being publicised by the middle of February; it referred of course to the report of the Royal Commission and made a general demand that evening students "at any suitable places in London" should qualify as students of the university and as candidates for its degrees.[22]

The Albert faction counterattacked. It now drew Gresham College into its design and tried to reactivate the whole procedure by putting up an amended charter for a "Gresham University", which differed little from the original cause of all the trouble.[23] By now there was so much disquiet that the government was forced to recommend a new enquiry, and so there came about the second London University or Gresham Commission under the chairmanship of the Earl Cowper.

Within little more than a fortnight of its appointment the London Society had rushed off its memorial. The familiar arguments were all there, now rephrased so as to bring out the common cause of all the excluded bodies.[24] In due course James Stuart and Roberts appeared to give evidence on behalf of the Joint Board and the Council, and were examined at considerable length. They had nothing substantial to add except that the work of the Society had doubled since the time of the last commission; nevertheless the familiar case was gone over in great detail.

The L.S.E.U.T. was concerned to allay suspicions that it was trying to feather its own nest. Stuart began by announcing that he had come to advocate "not the adoption of the London Society . . . but the adoption by the new University of London of the methods and work of that Society". When it was put to Roberts that he wanted degrees for the greater glory of the Society and that something like an "associateship"

would be thought less of a prize he replied: "It does not matter a straw what the Society feels or thinks about it". Their position had been misunderstood and misrepresented; they were not concerned to look after their own present students but to suggest a way "in which the University can do the best possible work" and nothing would suffice "in doing the best possible for education in London, except the incorporation of the work in the degree system".[25]

Stuart insisted that it was the only way of meeting the vast challenge that London presented:

> I think there is no other way in which you can make the London University to have that hold on the general mass of the people which I take it you must desire it should have.... You have almost a *tabula rasa* for higher education.... You should endeavour to found in London the most permeating system of education that you can found.

But an entirely novel constitution would be needed, in short one that recognised teaching before institutions. The excluded bodies now came into the argument: there was no way of coordinating their work, as Lord Selborne's commission had desired, "except either by recognising them as colleges in your institution or by recognising, superintending, and methodising courses of teaching which suit your purposes in these places". Since the places could not appropriately become fully constituent colleges the only alternative was something like the method of University Extension, but raised to full university standing.[26]

According to the Society's witnesses the thinking behind the Gresham charter had to be stood on its head. University and King's had nothing to lose in a system that recognised all teaching of sufficient standard, whereas the rest of London would lose virtually everything if the constitution admitted only the major colleges. It was those colleges that needed to be fitted into the university framework as exceptional cases. Indeed there was deliberate and pointed criticism of them. Stuart believed that if the university were dominated by University and King's their chief contribution to its governance would be the pursuit of private advantage. Roberts stated baldly that there had been "a great deal of jealousy and suspicion" and that the colleges, unprepared for the work of extending university teaching, had collaborated only reluctantly with those who were willing to do it: "By the very framing of the Charter

I think they show that they do not in the least grasp the problem".[27] In this way the L.S.E.U.T. lifted its case above special pleading.

R. D. Roberts lived a double life, for although he devoted his working days to English higher education he remained very much a Welshman and continued to be active in Welsh affairs. As if the excitements of the Selborne and Cowper commissions were not enough he occupied himself during these years, 1888 to 1892, with exactly the same designs on the proposed university for Wales.

The history of that University is not as long as that of the University of London, but it is almost as complicated. For present purposes the story has to be taken up in 1886, leaving the previous thirty years of somewhat spasmodic campaigning out of the account. In 1886 the demand for a Welsh university awarding its own degrees was revived, and R. D. Roberts was ready with his own characteristic contribution to the debate.

He had known for a long time what he wanted. In the mid 1870s there had been contact between the Cambridge Local Lectures and the University College of Aberystwyth. It was a period at which, in the face of severe money and staffing problems, the place was trying to turn itself into a genuine centre of higher education; C. J. Cooper, a Trinity man and one of Stuart's early recruits, undertook part-time teaching there on a kind of secondment, and Roberts, who himself had just taken up Extension lecturing, agreed to fill a gap in the natural sciences department.[28] He brought his Extension ideals with him and inaugurated extramural provision at Aberystwyth. During his first public lecture in 1876 he proclaimed:

> In my most sanguine moments I find myself looking forward to the time when it will be considered as necessary to have in every town and district educated teachers of the people as it is now to have pastors to look after their religious education. One of the functions of the University College of Wales is to stand forth as a witness ever before the people that they must not rest until the means of higher education is within the reach of all.[29]

Subsequently he acted as the London agent for a clamorous unofficial lobby of townspeople which was formed to challenge the government's obvious hostility to the claims of Aberystwyth. He and his friends took as their watchword the idea that Aberystwyth was a people's college

such as had never been seen before. Roberts' aggressive dealings with senior members of the government plainly did not endear him to the more cautious and subtle men who represented the college officially.[30]

By 1886 the time that Roberts foresaw in his "most sanguine moments" seemed to have drawn a little closer. Aberystwyth had weathered some frightful storms and could now league itself with two younger colleges at Cardiff and Bangor. All three were in receipt of government grant and were beginning to fret at their subjection to London University in the matter of degree-granting. (A Welshman said of the London system, "you feel yourself in the grasp of a merciless life-crushing machine".[31]) Under the leadership of the brilliant and energetic Viriamu Jones, once principal of Firth College, Sheffield and now principal at Cardiff, the three colleges began to press for a federal university constitution and tried to interest the government and Welsh members of Parliament in their case.

Roberts immediately publicised his own concept of a popular university. In 1887 he revised the address he had given during the International Health Exhibition three years before and published it in Aberystwyth. The booklet made much of the Extension method and of affiliation, but had very little to say about access to degrees, and nothing directly about the Welsh problem. At the same time he published in a Welsh-language magazine his "Y prifysgolion a'r bobl" ("The universities and the people") in which he did propose that the colleges should equip themselves with a complete system of University Extension.[32]

In the following year several conferences were held on the proposed university; resolutions asking for a charter along the lines of Victoria's were sent to the Lord President, and those responsible were asked to produce a draft. But then a brake was applied, for a serious difference of opinion had emerged. The colleges, vulgarly regarded as mere secondary schools for poorly educated Welsh youths who wished to take a London degree, had an urgent interest in conventional academic respectability; for that reason they favoured the Victoria, or the Irish, style of constitution, in which teaching and examining were as closely connected as in a unitary university. A vocal minority objected to such a teaching institution on the grounds that it gave a monopoly to the residential colleges and virtually closed higher education to young people from working-class families. This populist sentiment had long been a factor in Welsh educational debate and the generosity with which miners,

quarrymen and village people had supported endowment appeals was fresh in everyone's mind.

The historian of the University of Wales describes the opposition as committed to an "examining university" concept, and identifies R. D. Roberts as its "chief exponent".[33] That is of course to misrepresent Roberts' own position. Whatever views other opponents may have held, he wanted examining to be inextricably tied to teaching; he was arguing, as always, for a bilateral form of organisation, and that would have produced a supreme "teaching university". He was involved in the same fight against vested institutional interest as was going on in London.

A pause for reflection was considered advisable, but the colleges were becoming increasingly sure of their case. For one thing the implementing of the Welsh Intermediate Education Act promised them that future recruits would be fitted to undertake higher education. During 1891 the charter agitation was resumed. Bangor hoped that a united front would be possible if a sop were thrown to the dissidents in the shape of provisions for Extension lectures, but they were not to be so easily diverted. Another conference was called in November, and it approved an outline constitution for a federal university. Again the standard history is misleading when it states that "unanimous resolutions" had now become possible. A composite resolution put from the chair included a recommendation that candidates for degrees must have attended a regular course at one of the colleges; according to *The Times* the attendance clause excited considerable opposition and the full resolution went through only by a majority vote. Again Roberts was implicated, and by this date he was actively canvassing a large scheme of alternative graduation through Extension methods.[34]

The Dean of St Asaph (Dr John Owen, later principal of St David's College and Bishop of St David's), who was prominent among Roberts' supporters, immediately took the question up in an article for the *Welsh Review*. Although the piece was mainly devoted to the knotty problem of theological studies in the university its author believed that Extension was if anything more important; it was "one of the most vital aspects of the whole question, as on its solution will largely depend the question whether the Welsh University is to be in full reality, as well as in name and import, national". Many Welsh families, especially among the working classes, could not afford to send their sons to a college; were they then to be barred from what ought to be open to them? Owen

endorsed Roberts' "most true and practical remark" that the answer lay in something already quite familiar to the country, an itinerant system:

> A certificate of having attended a prescribed number of lectures in each subject, either at a recognised college of the University or in a class taught by a teacher recognised by the University Governing Body, ought to be a sufficient guarantee against cramming, and a strict insistence upon an adequate standard in the University examinations ought to be a sufficient guarantee for the honour of the Welsh degrees.

He pointed out that Wales, compared with Scotland or Ireland, did not receive its fair share of imperial funds for education; the deficit should be made good through support of "a large number of itinerant University Extension lecturers".[35]

At this point in the story an intriguing development just failed to take place. During the previous summer the post of principal at University College, Aberystwyth had been lying vacant. In certain Welsh academic circles it was rumoured that R. D. Roberts would offer himself and, since he was one of the few natives of high attainment and mature years and experience, that he would be a very strong candidate.[36] Roberts did not apply for the post. (He had recently been offered improved terms by the London Society on the understanding that he would make the secretaryship his full-time occupation.) Had he become Aberystwyth's principal the college would no doubt have developed somewhat differently. On the other hand it is very unlikely that he would ever have had his way with the University of Wales.

Throughout 1892 the other side busied itself with drafting a conventional charter; determined to avoid the disaster of an examining university they stipulated that attendance at a constituent college must be an essential precondition of taking a degree. Roberts now wrote a clause-by-clause critique of the "official" submission and in December put up his own "Suggested Outline of a Charter to constitute the University of Wales".

The drafter-in-chief of the majority recommendations retorted:

> The first duty of a Welsh University is to strengthen and assist the work of the National Colleges .... Concentration as a rule means economy of force; breadth of effort may easily involve waste of power; and "generosity" is sometimes of that kind which impoverishes many and enriches none.[37]

The final constitutional conference took place early in 1893; the "Suggested Outline" could muster only two votes against twenty-one, and so it was roundly rejected.[38] Roberts was to have one small consolation in the form of a clause exempting suitably qualified candidates from part of the period of attendance at a college — but that was no advance on affiliation.

Meanwhile an independent enquiry commissioned by the government had been taking place; the report recommended that a university should be established on the basis of resident study and dismissed out of hand the idea of peripatetic degree teaching. The author was O. M. Edwards, an alumnus of Aberystwyth, whose grim comment on the London degree system appeared on an earlier page. He had discovered more liberal possibilities, having gone on to a distinguished career at Oxford and a fellowship of Lincoln.[39]

Roberts published a bitter commentary on these events a few weeks later. He was convinced "that if a University for Wales is established upon the lines of the proposed Charter, it will be a disaster to education in Wales". He did not wish to belittle the advantages of residence, but three small colleges only nominally united could not provide the whole solution, and furthermore the Welsh people were "no strangers to the system of itinerancy".[40] After the die had been cast the official proposals and the alternatives to them attracted considerable comment in the press. Then in the middle of 1893 a motion was introduced in the Commons in favour of Roberts' "Outline", two Welsh members spoke up for his ideas, and arguments were heard that the colleges were flouting the interests of the people; the motion was thrown out without a division. The charter of the University of Wales, without any innovations, was sealed in November.

To those who believed they knew what a real university should be Roberts was a thorn in the flesh. Latter-day historians of higher education in Wales seem to find him equally irritating; his idealism may be conceded, but he is presented as something of an obstructive and out-of-touch fanatic. Such a judgment perfectly betrays the institutional point of view to which he was so much opposed.

Unfortunately the Welsh business provided a foretaste of what was to happen in London. Some of the members of the Cowper Commission were clearly sympathetic towards Extension, but they could not rise to any feats of unconventional thinking. The report of 1894 suggested a

generous but still fairly orthodox constitution, proposing that a wider range of bodies should be admitted than the Gresham charter allowed for, and that they should retain their identities. The claims of Birkbeck and the like were rejected on the grounds that they were concerned essentially with secondary and not higher education; Extension was treated rather more favourably:

> we have no doubt that the "University Extension" system deserves the encouragement of the University, and under favourable conditions may be a useful supplement to its work, as bringing under the direct influence of University study many students who would otherwise have remained outside that influence.

The Commission recommended that a standing board for Extension should be guaranteed under the constitution, and rather vaguely sketched as one of its functions:

> to bring the more promising of such students into closer relation with the University by the recognition of work done under its superintendence as an equivalent for such part of the regular courses of the University as may be determined.

The *University Extension Journal* welcomed the report, but without much conviction that degree study would in fact be thrown open; indeed it concluded that the Royal Commission had failed to deal properly with the problem of evening study and its academic status.[41]

The general conclusion of the Cowper report was that there should be only one university in London and that the existing University should be remodelled, not by voluntary agreement but according to the requirements of statutory commissioners. There the matter rested for several years, and so this study has space in which to turn to other questions.

41

4

Objections: degrees on the cheap

Oxford opinions

In 1885 Oxford's moribund Extension Committee was revived and given the task of staking out a claim in a field already well worked by Cambridge and the London Society. Conflict was not inevitable, but a late arrival and the collective ethos of the young men who threw themselves into the enterprise brought it about; Oxford Extension adopted an aggressive style, it was energetic and increasingly intrusive.[1]

If Cambridge and London had always worked willingly together in a "universalist" understanding that Extension was above all a service to the adult public Oxford followed a much more "particularist" line, working to tighten its own University's hold on the affections of the country. Michael Sadler, the new secretary, gathered round him a remarkable commando of talents and enthusiasms. Those who were to achieve distinction as statesmen and public servants included Sadler himself, Halford Mackinder, C. G. Lang and W. A. S. Hewins; they and their less celebrated colleagues were fully the equal of Stuart's Cambridge recruits of the mid 1870s. Differing on questions of party politics they nevertheless shared a conviction that education and moral influence were essential weapons in securing England's social and political future. They readily adopted the missionary role; permeating their ideas was an Oxford mystique, a sense that their University was a very special place in which a privileged vision was vouchsafed. They were not immodest or unattractive people, but they spoke and acted with all the assurance of youth convinced that it had a superior message to proclaim and a superior qualification to do so.

Sadler quickly established a wide empire; he did it by offering short courses of half the traditional number of lectures, which were less demanding financially and so allowed voluntary centres to survive on what was stony ground from the point of view of established policy. He was also prepared to push into quarters where the other authorities believed they had a prior claim. Cambridge and London became

irritated, fearing that study on easy terms would debase the currency and undermine the determination of their own local centres to work towards more solid educational results.

By 1889 the Oxford Committee felt secure enough to begin advertising the virtues of its chosen methods. The short-course policy, it insisted, was the only way of bringing university teaching to the smaller towns and into many working-class areas. Extension should be concerned with cultural inspiration as much as with the routines of study. The *University Extension Journal* (published by London and supported by Cambridge) ruefully described Oxford as "an institution which displays in such curious harmony the elements of old-world romance and of practical vigour".[3] The vigorous Oxonians wasted no opportunity of puffing their own wares or of winning symbolic advantage. Between 1980 and 1895 they produced the rival *Oxford University Extension Gazette* and during those years there was an almost incessant paper warfare. Every issue of policy, and there were many, was polarised. The conflict often seems like single combat between Sadler and Roberts, inevitably perhaps, for there was a difference of age and temperament and the older man had such great personal authority in the two senior branches of the Extension movement.

With equal inevitability Roberts' demands for degrees through University Extension excited Oxford's vehement disapproval. Sadler and his party set great store by residence; it was part of the mystique and it was after all the special experience that had made them what they were. The dignity of an ancient university, somewhat romanticised to be sure, set a boundary at which their undoubted reformism came to a respectful halt.

There was, as the *Journal* detected, a peculiar ambiguity about Oxford Extension, a mixture of modern enterprise and old-fashioned orthodoxy. The enterprise could be quite brash. In 1888 Sadler organised the first "summer meeting" of Extension students, and by importing hundreds of strangers, mostly young and female, into Oxford during the quiet of the long vacation rather upset some of his crusted seniors. A year later the meeting was repeated with even greater success. On a rising wave of enthusiasm the secretary and some of his close colleagues decided that these gatherings might become a regular feature of Oxford education, a fourth term set aside for non-matriculated students.

During the course of the 1889 meeting Sadler, Mackinder and Hudson

Shaw had printed a scheme for a University diploma for Extension students. It would have required attendance at local lecture centres during three or four winters and periods of residential study at Oxford over four summer terms. Without the approval of the authorities Shaw announced in public that the summer meeting was to become a permanent event and referred in outline to the scheme of extended study. Certain other indiscretions were committed at the same time and polite reprimands followed. That may explain why the office copy of the Diploma proposals carries a note that they were never issued.[3] It is an interesting document nonetheless, and the episode says something about Oxford's pushing and rather opportunistic manner.

Sadler and his two colleagues explicitly contrasted their scheme with the Cambridge Affiliation arrangements. Although it asked for no concession from the University other than the title of a Diploma it would provide "an educational weapon, not less powerful". The argument was that Extension students could be brought under the full academic authority of the University without offering them anything that would erode the privileges of the regular undergraduate body; the scheme "asks for no degree and suggests no remission of residence, but advocates the requirement of a certain measure of residence from those who would otherwise have had none".[4]

The Diploma disappeared from view and Sadler was already finding other exciting new policies with which to occupy himself, but the hostility towards Roberts' ideas continued. Some two years later an early number of Oxford's *Extension Gazette* coined the phrase that provides the title of this book. The editor was anxious to correct an opinion recently arrived from America that the demand for University Extension was a threat to the proper interests of the universities; his defence included a denial that the movement was academically subversive:

> Nor must any confusion be allowed to exist between the diplomas or degrees awarded by the University to the student who has completed a full College course, and those awarded for the completion of a shorter course of non-resident study .... No one who is interested in University Extension teaching wishes to make it a backstairs to a degree.[5]

There was no reference to the current demands of the London Society, but the *Gazette* must have had them in mind.

Within a matter of days Roberts took an opportunity of stating his case before an Oxford audience, intervening in a discussion held during the summer meeting to announce that "the time had come to open up a new avenue to University privileges and degrees . . . a new ideal of a University career". The published version of Sadler's reply is rather confusing, but three connected points seem to have been made: first that Extension students had already shown themselves equal to university demands in their own limited fields of work; secondly that part-time students would never be able to meet all the requirements that must be made of candidates for degrees; and thirdly that it would be wrong to offer cheap substitutes.[6]

I may have imposed a clarity on the response that it did not in fact have. If Sadler found it difficult to make himself entirely clear it was because an ambiguity was already affecting Oxford attitudes. In its official capacity the *Gazette* continued to attack those who wanted degrees through Extension,[7] and at the same time it began to fly a kite for the substitute that was supposed to be quite unacceptable.

In mid 1891 Mackinder and Sadler were busy revising and enlarging a little book they had written a year earlier on the Extension movement seen from an Oxford point of view. The new edition, *University Extension, Past, Present and Future*, was dominated by the idea that the movement was poised to make a very large contribution in several areas of national education; it raised the question of academic awards, condemning any novelties that would lower the value of a degree but also adding:

> The hope of many of those who are engaged in the "extra-mural" work of Oxford and Cambridge is, that the Universities may gradually see their way to confine more closely their *internal* organisation, apart from vacation courses, to the function of research and to the more exclusive instruction of advanced scholars and teachers, while at the same time controlling and inspiring a vast external system of higher general education . . . . The local centres of such an external system will have to act as roots, sucking out of every class of the nation all who have special gifts for teaching, scholarship, or research, and passing them on to the resident teachers in the University for higher training.[8]

Although its tendency was "meritocratic" rather than democratic this

Sadler-Mackinder speculation seemed to represent a move towards the known policy of the London Society. A preemptive strike rather than a gesture of solidarity was probably intended however: Sadler and his henchmen were quick to take up other people's ideas when it seemed possible that something might come of them, and then to bend them to their own purposes. A French educationist who visited Oxford in the summer of 1891 picked up the impression that Sadler was sympathetic towards Roberts' plan for using Gresham College as a base for higher Extension study leading to degrees.[9] Sadler had this peculiar ability, a kind of intellectual duplicity manifest at other points in his early career, of entertaining opposed possibilities until it became clear which way the wind would blow.

The significance of talk about a "vast external system" was that Sadler and Mackinder had recently adopted the idea that it might be possible to found satellite "University Extension Colleges" in towns too small to support the familiar kind of institution of university rank. It was an old idea that appears to have been renovated by a group of Cambridge voluntary Extension workers in Devonshire; the earliest published outline of what could be done appeared in the new edition of *University Extension*.

The first such college was founded at Reading in the spring of 1892 under the ægis of Oxford and the municipality.[10] Mackinder was its first principal. At the summer meeting immediately following Sadler began to advocate the introduction of a "B.A. (University Extension)" to be awarded by a joint board of all the English universities; Mackinder then pursued the idea in a letter to the *Gazette*, emphasising its immediate relevance to the college at Reading:

> We shall have to train our best students for *some* Degree, a London one if nothing better is open, though the students would themselves prefer another. Before very long there will be a very strong temptation, perhaps an irresistable one, for these University Extension Colleges to league themselves together, on the model of the Victoria University, to loose the tie with the old Universities and to obtain the Degree-giving power, unless Oxford and Cambridge act generously and betimes, while gratitude is yet warm.[11]

Indeed Mackinder went further than was strictly necessary and for a moment in the correspondence columns of a quite obscure little

periodical exhibited a reform scheme of dazzling novelty. It had the stamp of the future adept of National Efficiency, Imperialism and Geopolitics. The older universities could safeguard their position "by making some real use of the now almost idle letters 'M.A.' ". If the award of that degree were taken to signify without exception that the candidate had resided for a proper period the familiar routines and privileges would be in no way affected, and Oxford and Cambridge could assume enormous discretion in and influence over the award of first degrees. Extension students could be made eligible for a nonresident B.A.; those who obtained it, and indeed people holding a Bachelor's degree of any other approved English, colonial, American or even continental university, could be admitted to residence and to study for the M.A. The old universities would become "more truly imperial than ever before" and even "the Universities of the Universities for the whole English speaking race".[12]

Second thoughts suggest that Mackinder's glimpse of reform, like his eventual politics, was strongly conservative. He outpaced Sadler, who seems to have been content in public to harp on the distinction between those who had and those who had not enjoyed the benefits of residence and to toy with the second-rate substitute that he had earlier condemned,[13] yet both were caught between knowing that access to university awards would have to be widened and feeling that academic privileges must be preserved.

The *Gazette* continued to reflect their difficulty. In the spring of 1892 the plea by the Dean of St Asaph for a semi-peripatetic Welsh university drew condemnation and the dismissive comment that to bestow degrees on Extension students was simply to "confuse or mislead the public". But a few months later, when the status of the Reading college had been added to the agenda, the *Gazette* reprinted without adverse comment Richard Moulton's "educational speculation" on the university of the future, a copy of which had found its way to Oxford by way of the United States.[14] Early in 1893 the periodical gave Roberts space to declare his opposition to what was happening to the Welsh university, and then applied itself to putting the critics of the draft charter in their place. It trusted that they did not want to risk creating "a Welsh edition of the University of London" and reminded them of "the essential value of residence in University education". The next number of the *Gazette* printed yet another plea for the B.A. (Univ. Ext.).[15] Perhaps the most

that one may conclude from these exchanges is that, if there were to be a vast external system, Mackinder and Sadler were determined to be its sponsors and were prepared to denigrate anyone else's claim to leadership.

When it began to be clear that Reading would get nothing very substantial out of Oxford University Sadler was free to devote himself with a single mind to attacking the policy of degrees through University Extension. An opportunity came when the report of the second commission on a university for London was published and again when the twenty-first-anniversary congress of the Extension movement endorsed the call for open degrees. During 1895 the *Gazette* was worried that something might actually come of the Gresham Commission's very restrained recommendations. If they were given a trial, it hoped the L.S.E.U.T. would see sense and decline to give up its freedom to experiment simply in order to win "the baleful privilege of academic recognition".[16] The last shot of open warfare had now been fired. The success of the Extension Congress of 1894 and certain other coincidental happenings induced a mood of greater cooperativeness and a new *Extension Journal*, sponsored by all the branches of the movement, began publication; disagreements continued but they had to be pursued privately.

Cambridge scarcely figured in the disputes described in the last few pages. For four years from 1891 Roberts gave all of his time to the London Society and his place at the Syndicate offices was taken by Arthur Berry, a practised Extension lecturer and reform-minded fellow of King's. Berry did what he could for progress, for example by broaching the awkward question of employing women lecturers, but his masters seem to have been content to rest on their earlier achievements. To the women's movement at Cambridge the early 1890s meant stagnation and frustration; the last demand for admission to degrees had gone off like a "damp squib" and general indifference had set in.[17] From the Local Lectures point of view also it must have seemed that for the time being Cambridge had gone as far as could be expected in extending itself.

Berry was not impressed with affiliation as a tool of educational reform. Early in 1893 he sent Michael Sadler an account of Cambridge's experience since the introduction of the new scheme some five years earlier. The greatest benefit to the local centres was "the sentiment of

connection with the University . . . as distinguished from mere arrangement of systematic courses". The practical advantages to students were virtually nonexistent for "the definite privileges involved in Affn. have not been claimed except in 5 cases; and they do not appear to me to be intrinsically very important".[18]

The historian of Cambridge Extension has suggested that Berry was a stand-in for his older and more experienced (and more belligerent) colleague. Certainly his stance as a director of policy was not very secure. For example he soon found himself supervising a sudden and heavy provision of elementary science courses for the county councils under the provisions of the technical instructions acts, an escapade to which Roberts was totally opposed and of which he himself was obviously suspicious. Then he was caught out by the novelty of a new generation of local colleges. At the very beginning he criticised Oxford's new enthusiasm, perceptively arguing that Extension colleges would divert attention to the "professional student" and sap the missionary spirit of the movement; but before long he found himself overseeing Cambridge's contribution to a second college of that kind, at Exeter. All this may help explain why Cambridge opinion was so little heard during a period of vigorous policy-propagation and controversy; much of that opinion was Roberts', and he had taken it to London with him.

There was another reason for the inactivity. Although the open university was invented by men closely associated with Cambridge its authors recognised the need for caution and the oblique approach. In none of Moulton's or Roberts' otherwise fervent propoganda does there seem to be a clear demand that Cambridge itself should open its degrees to external students; in that respect at least they were thoroughly realistic. The one wrote of some kind of joint universities' board and the other directed all his practical energies at two universities in the process of acquiring constitutions. In 1894 Roberts proposed that in the ongoing work of Extension a firm administrative distinction should be made between a popular, pioneer or short-course department, and a certificate department; the implication was that the certificate work should evolve into a complete system of degree study. His Cambridge friends welcomed the device but were cautious about the implication. The Reverend T. J. Lawrence, one of James Stuart's earliest recruits, a fairly extreme radical and much respected friend of the Local Lectures, agreed that clarification was needed, but could look forward to degree-

giving only "possibly in time to come". (Lawrence had settled for the same extreme gradualism during the degrees-for-women debate of 1887.)[19]

I have suggested elsewhere that in matters of academic reform, of coping with the emergence of the provincial universities and so on, the Extension agencies of Oxford and Cambridge faced the same problems. They had extensive empires of territory, and they hoped moral influence, which were vulnerable to competition; to some extent they both provided a public-relations service for ancient institutions that were being forced to readjust their claims in matters of national education. Yet, except on issues of key importance, there was a marked difference of style. Sadler and his successor, J. A. R. Marriott, took a forthright and aggressive line, always actively pressing Oxford's interests. Roberts' own forthrightness was of a different kind and he spent his time in Cambridge prodding the University rather than pushing its interests; the Syndicate comes through as affecting a disengaged manner.[20] This difference in corporate personality was reflected even in the way official records were kept, Oxford's being fulsome and revealing and Cambridge's terse and neutral; I leave it to others to show what traits in the parent universities would account for the contrast.

Matriculation and residence

From its earliest days up to the present time a constant theme of university adult education had been that the better among its students are capable of writing essays and examination papers fully the equal of those produced by honours candidates within the universities. The evidence of examination performance was an important part of the case for degrees through Extension. Advocates made much of it and were able to refer to the laudatory reports of independent intramural examiners; Stuart and Roberts were themselves experienced university examiners and knew what they were talking about. When it suited their purpose the Oxford men were prepared to make the same case.

Was the argument from results a sufficient one? Passing examinations in a limited number of closely defined subjects was a precondition of obtaining a degree, but, the critics insisted, it was not proof in itself that a candidate had been throroughly educated in the way that a university ought to require. While questioning an enthusiastic witness to the

Extension students' performance in examinations marked at degree standard the chairman of the second London university commission mused, "Supposing some of them could not spell or write grammatical English?"[21] From the conventional point of view a real university education depended on other attainments as well — that the student had already had a sound school training, and that he had enjoyed the intangible benefits of residence. (To be sure London University had dispensed with residence, but its matriculation requirements were demanding and strict.) Thus the Extension degree enthusiasts had two important objections to the all-comers policy to take into account.

An amount of compromise was possible on the issue of "matriculation". Cambridge Extension students who obtained an Affiliation Certificate could not enter the University as second-year undergraduates without further ado, they also had to pass a test of basic attainment in all the subjects, with the exception of Greek, that figured in the Previous examination (familiarly known as the Little Go). Nearly every advocate of the Extension degree seems to have accepted that a requirement of the kind was inevitable.

In 1892 shortly before the appointment of the second London university commission Canon G. F. Browne, a member of Council of the L.S.E.U.T., gave the annual address to the London Extension students, in which he was concerned to allay fears about the Society's policy on degrees. Until recently Browne had been chief secretary of the Cambridge Syndicate; although a number of interesting developments took place in his time he was a cautious manager, and the reputation that survives is that of the shrewd and conservative university politician.[22] Once translated to a canonry of St. Paul's, however, he turned progressive, at least to the extent of being prepared to back the Society's demand for an open university in the capital. The one essential, he suggested, was to scotch the accusation of "degrees on the cheap". His own proposal was to award an "associateship" of the University on the strength of special studies in Extension; the holder would be entitled to exchange it for a regular degree once he had satisfied the authorities as to the standard of his general education. An associateship would therefore have standing in its own right, being evidence of high attainment, and the accepted meaning of the degree would not be subverted.[23] On this particular point Browne seems to have been speaking for himself rather than for the

Society; as noted in Chapter 3, Roberts did not warm to his views.

Browne was already something of an educational statesman, having been nominated to sit on the committee that supervised the first Treasury grants to the university colleges in England. He had a fondness for inventing academic constitutions that yoked progress to old privileges. Thus in 1888 and again in 1893 he proposed the chartering of an "Imperial University" to confer degrees on the women students of Oxford, Cambridge and London; his plan required however that the candidates should follow courses laid down by their home, and male-controlled, universities. In the summer of 1892 he found himself a member of the Gresham University Commission, and although the Extension witnesses were not prepared to entertain an associateship Browne seems to have given them a sympathetic hearing.

When that commission called James Stuart they met one who almost entirely discounted the problem of entry requirements. In his evidence he hinted that the additional test imposed on those who held Cambridge Affiliation certificates was a concession to university inertia, agreed to only for the sake of the remission of one year's residence. As nearly as common politeness allowed he told the commissioners that preliminary examinations, and especially those in classical languages, were academic humbug. Pressed more closely he said that he would be prepared to make attainment in English, and only that, a universal preliminary requirement, and would additionally expect students of science to have elementary mathematics. He was "very much more ready to give a degree upon very little more than a continuance of University Extension than perhaps others would". Unfortunately public opinion insisted on qualification in a number of what might be called "school subjects".

These were his own views, he added, which were not generally acceptable even within Extension, and so they should not be allowed to distort the argument. He was concerned above all to win one point of principle — that serious Extension study deserved full academic recognition. The details of its exact weight in the graduation system must be left to the new university and its educational experts to decide. There ought to be an acknowledgment of a "fair equivalent" in different modes of intellectual training, and he was concerned with neither the slavish imitation nor the demolition of ordinary academic practices.[24]

When his turn came to be examined Roberts also seemed to want to dismiss the additional qualification problem as a matter of detail to

be settled by the new university itself, but he allowed himself to be drawn into a fuller discussion. His statements, which avoided Stuart's iconoclasm, probably expressed the official policy of the Society. The Extension method could not provide a complete education, and therefore it would be proper for the university to ask for additional evidence. The difficulty however was that the ordinary matriculation examination was totally unsuited to adult students and would be mere drudgery to them: something more appropriate and adaptable was needed for those following the Extension route:

> the Matriculation is a block. Something would have to be done to make it possible for the student to make a start at all .... I should not like to see any relaxation except merely in the question of adjustment. What I would like to see would be the examination adjusted in such a way as to bring it within reach of an intelligent evening student without its being necessary for him to merely cram the work.[25]

It was with this sort of problem in mind that the French observer referred to several pages previously wondered how adult education as such was possible. University Extension designed to remedy the deficiencies of the country's educational system was to his way of thinking suspended in limbo and fettered with paradox: adults could pursue worthwhile study only on the basis of a sound training got in a properly organised system of public education; but a country with a system of that kind would not need the improvisations of adult education. Monsieur Espinas had valuable and perceptive things to say about the Extension movement but his Gallic hyperlogic, I think, typically missed the point.[26]

From the orthodox English point of view the Extensionists' scheme was offensive because of its nonresident character. Conservatives, and many liberals too, associated a real university education with Oxford and Cambridge, and were therefore automatically opposed to the recognition of external students. Oddly enough it was the reputed conservative, G. F. Browne, who denied that the case for residence had any general validity. In his address of 1892, anticipating the next round of the university-for-London debate, he pointed out that whilst the methods of the older universities might be the best, higher education in the large centres of population must operate under quite different social conditions; there residence could have neither the same ethos nor the same practical importance, and it was particularly so in London. It followed

that evening study of a proper standard had every claim of full recognition — with the one qualification that Extension alone could not take men or women with little previous school training and turn them into fully educated people.

To a determined supporter of the residence principle that argument probably seemed like mere expediency. The editor of the Oxford *Extension Gazette* reacted indignantly to any suggestion that residence was dispensable, and early in 1892 arraigned the Bishop of Bangor for saying so. This divine had recently told an audience in Manchester that "in the peculiar circumstances of our country at the present day" the time had come to establish other than purely teaching universities; people who could not go into residence must no longer be denied guidance and access to examinations, and the Extension system ought to be accepted as a proper contribution to higher education. The *Gazette* predictably found him guilty of trying to debase the coinage. Sadler and his friends assumed the right to speak on behalf of the "older universities" and found the essence of their educational method not so much in organised study as in a particular social experience. Their journal allowed that high attainment under Extension auspices might be rewarded, as at Cambridge, with a small remission of residence — and then mischievously pointed out that university entrance by that door had proved to be of no practical significance whatsoever.[27]

At least that was their message when they were not pursuing a special dispensation for their college at Reading. The B.A. (Univ. Ext.) was invented partly to evade the objection that London already offered as much as was required; it implied that the residence argument had to be shelved for the time being. Sadler tactfully rephrased the conventional formula: "in work of a University stamp, the accepted form of recognition is a degree, awarded after examination. Most teachers are, moreover, agreed that this examination should bear some close relation to previous teaching". Having in effect substituted attendance for residence there was a certain contortion in Sadlers' continuing attacks on Roberts' arguments. His collaborator, Joseph Wells, was no more successful in explaining the likely status of a B.A. (Univ. Ext.) but he did at least confess that the residence argument had been thoroughly compromised:

> The old Universities can hardly give their ordinary B.A. degree to Extension students: it is so completely identified with the idea of "residence" and "residence" to all who know Oxford and Cambridge is

so valuable and important, that to open these degrees to non-resident students would be to produce a most unfortunate confusion. And yet, while Oxford and Cambridge cannot make their Extension students B.A.s in the ordinary sense, they are naturally desirous to recognize all real work done under their authority. They therefore on their side have the same desire which the best students have on the other side, viz. that formal organised work should be rewarded in the time-honoured way, by a degree.[28]

In his newly-furbished principal's office at Reading Mackinder was mulling over more radical possibilities, and threatening to confuse the issue even further. London University had done good work in its day in "forcing more liberal views on to the older corporations", but its system increasingly looked like a "passing phase in the history of education" and, he suggested, ought to give way to a completely general solution to the problem of access to higher study. A special B.A. tied to Extension might actually delay the necessary rationalisation. Hence Mackinder's passing enthusiasm for the idea that Richard Moulton had recommended six years earlier — to throw the existing Bachelor's degree wide open and reserve the Master's degree for those who had been in residence.

The Oxford policy was in a tangle. The difficulty is evident in the rather tortuous discussion of the problem in the chapter that Sadler wrote on University Extension for Joseph Wells' symposium *Oxford and Oxford Life* (1892). He believed that Extension students would come to demand degrees but that the special claims of a residential education must not be abandoned: "The valid reason for maintaining this distinction is not the protection of privilege, but the recognition of the fact that the benefit which the average man gets from his University life largely consists . . . in the social experience he gains". Sadler then resurrected his idea of a summer university for Extension students to provide some of that social experience; a new term from 1 August to 12 September could be instituted at Oxford, and any matriculated student who kept nine such terms could be admitted to the final honours examinations. Yet he found so many objections to his own idea, including the fact that it would be of no advantage to women, that he had to dismiss it. All that remained was the sketch of a second-rate award, the B.A. (Univ. Ext.), to be available through approved Extension colleges.[29]

At the same time as they were flirting with their chosen compromise the Oxford people went on attacking the other side, and still kept

residence as their trump card. The *Gazette* dealt roughly with Roberts' vision of a Welsh university, and was alarmed at the enthusiasm in the Principality for an itinerant and widely extended system of degree courses:

> what is the essence of the modern view of University work? Surely that a period of residence in one of the colleges of the University must be a condition precedent to a degree. To have listened to a travelling member of the University faculty is a good thing, but it is not equivalent to residence. The value of "residence" lies in a student's participation in the traditions, the "ethos", the atmosphere of the collegiate institution. A travelling teacher can convey an idea of what "residence" means, can quicken a desire for its advantages. But he cannot himself bestow these advantages.[30]

And that also came to be the dominant opinion among those who controlled the fate of the Welsh university. It was appropriately an Oxford don who advised the Privy Council that the university should be based on residential collegiate study. One of those who subsequently wrote the charter protested against R. D. Roberts' alternative proposals: "Diffused teaching can never be really equal to collegiate teaching, as the incalculable advantage of academic association forms no part of it".[31]

Early in 1894 the Oxford *Gazette* found the report of the Gresham Commission to be hopelessly confused. What could one make, it complained, of a constitution in which all students outside the metropolitan area must be "external", even though they might be enjoying a complete college education equal to that obtained by "internal" students at the constituent colleges; or in which Extension students within London might without any significant change of requirements become internal students? The Royal Commission had simply failed to grasp the significance of residence.[32] There was a certain logic in the criticism, but it was compelling only to those who stood on Oxford premises.

The Gresham Commission had no very obvious reason to concern itself with residence as such. It was nevertheless interested in the general social context of university study; it was suggested to Roberts, for example, that the Extension student did not enjoy "the social intermixture with his fellow students and the contact between the teachers and the taught" that were fostered by the permanent colleges. He replied of course that the students' associations meeting outside the lecture periods served

this purpose and thus "many of the demands of residence are really secured by the extension system". Moulton had anticipated the objection in his educational speculation of 1886: residence was the apex and was for the few; the many could have their associations (of which he was an energetic stimulator and patron) "for mutual encouragement and work".[33]

In 1894 the *Gazette* also dissociated Oxford from the interest that the University Extension Congress had shown in open degrees. English public opinion, it pontificated, was increasingly in favour of residence as an essential part of a university training. Similarly it declared that the Gresham Commission's proposals,especially in their confusion of resident and nonresident study under the style of one degree, threatened to undermine the position of those who were coming to sympathise with Oxford and Cambridge.[34]

Oxford was not normally very considerate of upstart foundations in the provinces that had or wished to have the power to grant degrees, but even there allies might be found — that is once they had begun to look more respectfully on the sacred image of a fully residential higher education. Thus early in 1895 the *Gazette* gave prominence to a speech made by Principal Rendall of Liverpool University College, in which "the ideal of University Residence" was contrasted with "the ideal of University Extension". Rendall argued that Extension existed not to encourage people to take up a life of study but to give them an element of study as part of a more varied life; it served to add an intellectual ingredient to leisure and recreation and by its very nature was incapable of including "the severer disciplines of learning".[35]

Presumably Rendall was contributing to that public opinion said to have acknowledged the strength of the Oxbridge case. Between the lines of his address one finds an image of the fully-fledged university and a corresponding estimate of the future needs of his own institution. For a provincial college there was ultimately no dignity in providing a patchwork education for an assortment of students recruited on a rather parochial plan. A "modern university" was a place of many severe disciplines, all aspiring to excellence and high specialisation. (And it was specialisation that Moulton disliked so much.) Admissions policy would have to adapt itself to feeding such an institution, and organisational logic dictated that residence would become increasingly important even in places whose origin was a protest against the old, exclusively residential universities.

The argument also had a "theoretical" aspect. Throughout the nineteenth century a debate had been going on about the true nature of the university and the education it offered. In early years the "classical" conception prevailed, with its emphasis on the teaching of a narrow and definitive range of subjects; by the mid century the most renowned educational thinkers were turning it into the great "liberal" theory of cultivation and character formation. Liberal doctrines were in turn enlarged so as to recognise the claims of specialised scholarship and research, and then the sciences and "modern" subjects. The champions of the "high" concept of the university could never reconcile themselves to utilitarian and technological pragmatism, yet they were able to tolerate all kinds of innovations in their own theory and to absorb them into their practice. This revisionism was eased because of the steady insistence that certain environmental conditions of a university education must be preserved: in effect residence remained the central informing quality of what was considered best in higher education, and the social arrangements of the old universities still exercised a powerful grip on the academic imagination.[30]

University Extension occupied an ambiguous position. In principle it offered no challenge to notions of excellence or character development, but in principle and in practice it rejected the environmental assumptions of the dominant liberal theory. For that reason the orthodox (when they did not reject the idea of Extension utterly) were impelled to show that it could be only a marginal activity. There lay the origin of the slogan that although university teaching could be extended the university itself could not. One of the most interesting aspects of the Oxford branch of the Extension movement is the way it built that qualification into its policies and rhetoric.

The intensive, institutional point of view was inconsistent with the perspective of those who wanted a genuine floating university. The builders of walls and the wardens of residence were closer to the main current of events.

5

Interpretations: a matter of motives

The administrators' self-interest

When it seemed likely that the statutes of the reformed London university would give substantial recognition to Extension study a critic complained that "a long mind, or at best a square one, is to be stamped as good as a solid one"; the Extension degree was a diversion of the proper energies of the movement and a minority of students was to be indulged at the expense of the majority whose educational interests were shaped by their primary commitment to the "busy world". The critic perceptively added that the whole policy served the providing authorities' and not the students' interests.[1] The suggestion that the demand for open degrees was inward looking, a consequence of the organisational problems of Extension itself, throws a significant new light on the subject.

If it were simply a matter of giving more people access to university distinctions why, one might again ask, was a contentious new system of graduation being proposed when the degrees of London University were already openly available? The question must have been often asked at the time. A London candidate could do his studying how and where it suited him — or her, since the the degrees had been open to women since 1878. If the better Extension students were as eager and able as their champions claimed, they were surely capable of winning one of those degrees. Looking back some years later Roberts said: "The answer is simple. Those degrees were as a rule beyond the reach of such students, not because the standard was too high, but because the conditions that had to be fulfilled were, in the circumstances, impossible conditions".[2] He meant of course the need to pass a series of rigid examinations, each one a hurdle to be taken after a prescribed interval and at a single leap.

There was no discernible connection between Extension teaching and the London graduation system, and the local lecture centres never saw it as within their competence to help candidates prepare themselves. The Gresham Commission reminded James Stuart that in principle anyone could go for a London degree and asked him how University Extension

might contribute; the obvious reply was that the lectures gave a valuable background training in certain disciplines but were never likely to cover the range of subjects laid down in the London regulations.[3]

Stuart's lack of interest in the question was a sign of the distaste that London University's methods often aroused. He himself had given the Extension movement its universally accepted principle that there could be little educational value in a system where examination was not intimately linked with teaching. In his earliest propaganda, even before the Cambridge Local Lectures scheme was begun, and for as long as he continued to address his followers, he insisted that Extension was a "conscious protest" against the tyranny of examination.[4] And at the heart of Moulton's plan for the reorganisation of liberal education was the idea that examination should be nothing more than the inspection of teaching. Roberts argued that the incentive of the London degree was back to front; a candidate was required to cram a range of subjects in order to get his award, whereas he ought to be rewarded for having properly studied a subject that he wanted to study.

The Extension degree sought to avoid the rigidity of the London system. Moulton and Roberts were offering a plan on which teaching was provided in the smallest academically viable units and in which most of the examinations followed the same pattern. Stuart tried to alert Lord Cowper and his colleagues to their great opportunity:

> it would be a great boon to London if you could, as far as London is concerned, lay down courses of study leading up to degrees which would detach from the University of London those evening students who are now taking their degrees there. You could turn out students more thoroughly trained, and far more cultivated than the existing evening degree students.[5]

That was the language of educational altruism, an argument directing itself outwards to the interests of the students. But the attempt to bring university degrees to the doors of the people was in fact a double game. Within almost everything that Roberts said and wrote on the subject there was a crucial evasion, and in part of his evidence to the Gresham Commission it was forced to the surface. To begin with he testified that there was an identifiable interest in Extension degrees, and then almost immediately added that his case did not depend on the "articulate

demand" — he did not believe that there was "a large number of extension students who consciously want a degree". Now came the characteristic displacement of reasoning: it could be asked, he continued, "What then is the case of taking a degree? Why propose to offer a degree?" And he answered his own question thus: "It is because I think that is the only means by which the work can be rendered more exact, more systematic, more thorough".[9]

Unfortunately the extension of university teaching showed too little of those qualities, and it was riddled with what even Sadler admitted to be "scrappiness". The questionable standard of much that went on left the leadership exposed to hostile criticism; it was an encumbrance in their search for status; it threatened their self-respect and sense of a distinctive mission. The problem of standards, like nearly every other problem of Extension, could be traced to the fact that the movement had to pay its way.

The universities gave it a name and little else. Nearly all income had to be produced by the local committees; they might issue appeals, hold bazaars and invite guarantee subscriptions but their safest assumption was that the fees from students attending a particular course must cover the cost of mounting that course. Costs were such that large audiences were a necessity. Even at the high admission prices charged for the socially select afternoon lectures it was essential to have upwards of a hundred people in attendance; to clear costs on the cheaper evening lecture courses the centre might have to recruit three times that number. A large proportion of those who came expected rational amusement rather than hard teaching. Members of the lecture audience were invited to attend an additional conversational "class" and to submit written work, and then if they had satisfied certain conditions to take the certificate examination. They were not compelled to do any of these things, and the only condition of joining a course was the payment of the admission fee.

In order to be able to attract fee-payers in sufficient number the local committee needed the freedom to choose from term to term what they considered an attractive combination of subject and teacher. There resulted a fragmented and *ad libitum* system of provision. Extension lecturing became a fine art of balancing scholarship and showmanship; critics wondered who was actually in charge, the voluntary committees or the university policy-makers.

The latter could not evade the structural reality and yet they had to try to exert educational control from the centre. The localities had to be persuaded to accept restrictions on their choice, to pledge themselves for years rather than months, and withal to keep themselves solvent. That was why so much trouble went into devising and organising the certificate examinations — to lure lecture-goers into becoming students. It was the manifest failure of the Extension certificates as an inducement that made the Extension degree such an attractive proposition. Accepting that there could be no significant change in the financial structure of their movement, Roberts and those who thought like him managed to convince themselves that the existing paper awards failed because they did not have sufficient standing. Give them the ultimate in university recognition and droves of committed students would surely come forward.

Experience of the ordinary Extension certificate system was indeed not encouraging, even for Cambridge whose examination practices were best developed.[7] The authorities were not so much grateful for the serious students who were attracted as alarmed at their numerical insignificance in the total lecture audience.

The basic award was the terminal certificate, just as the term's course was the unit of planning. Then there were sessional certificates for the slightly more persistent. At an early date Cambridge had introduced a "Vice-Chancellor's Certificate" to be awarded on presentation of six terminal certificates; the Affiliation Certificate also required a minimum of three years' study, but in a prescribed group and sequence of subjects. The London Society sought to emulate Cambridge in these matters; Oxford blew warm and cold according to the dictates of expediency and never had much effective commitment to systematic study.

By the early 1890s Cambridge and London were awarding almost 3,000 certificates each session. But that superficially impressive figure represented only eleven or twelve per cent of all enrolments, and it consisted largely of simple terminal certificates that would never contribute to a testimonial of extended study. The records of sessional certificates given by the London Society suggest the nature of the problem. In 1892, the year of its evidence to the Gresham Commission, the Society issued only ninety-four sessional awards, and fewer than one in a hundred of the lecture-goers had shown themselves to be serious students by that criterion. Although the number of certificates quadrupled over the next decade successful candidates never amounted to more than

three per cent of the total audience during a given session.[8]

The results for study sustained over a number of sessions were naturally even less encouraging. Jepson's study of the educational policy of University Extension notes that in the twenty years after 1879 Cambridge awarded on average only thirty Vice-Chancellor's Certificates a session. Affiliation Certificates, however much a matter of congratulation to the students and centres concerned, were numerically quite insignificant.[9] Since the major awards required at least three years of study the figures imply that at any one time there were probably not more than a hundred students at some point along the way to earning them. Even on the most generous estimate this category of really committed students could not have formed more than about two per cent of the total Cambridge lecture audience. Leaving the Oxford centres out of the reckoning, I suppose that in the early 1890s there were some four hundred people devoted to serious study through Extension methods in the whole of England.

Yet the case that Roberts put to two royal commissions was that if the local committees were able to sponsor courses leading to degrees literally hundreds of candidates would appear in London alone and would be prepared to keep up their Extension studies for eight years and more. It is impossible to say what might have happened — and it also happened to be the case that the sponsors of an Extension degree had no very convincing information either. The Extension certificates were not a great success, yet full university recognition would seemingly put everything to rights; there was no great articulate demand for degrees, yet students would suddenly favour longer and more demanding curricula once there was the incentive of a degree at the far end. Their seriousness would be contagious and the whole Extension movement would become "systematised". The power to offer degrees would give the central authorities "a very powerful lever", as Roberts put it to the Gresham Commission.

The equivocation appeared clearly in the way the supporters of open graduation answered their practical-minded critics who asked whether anyone actually wanted an Extension degree or could realistically be expected to win one under the proposed conditions. The first London university commission, whilst sympathetic to the demands of the L.S.E.U.T., asked what evidence there was of a genuine demand. Lord Ripon offered vague assurances and Roberts resorted to well-meaning misrepresentation. It was very difficult to say but:

> The proportion of students who do the regular work for the lecturers and take the examinations is, roughly speaking, from 20 to 25 per cent., or about one-fourth of the audiences. No doubt many of those would be persons whose occupations would probably make it difficult for them to carry on work for a great length of time; but I should expect that a very considerable number of that 20 or 25 per cent. of the audiences would be prepared to take a course of study leading to a degree.

The first part of the claim was ambiguous. Within the Cambridge jurisdiction those attending the classes and doing the written work certainly did amount to about a quarter of the total, but it is not certain that the London Society was at that time obtaining comparable results. And as I have already suggested neither authority could claim that sort of success for the examinations themselves. The same necessary optimism confused the evidence given to the next royal commission. At one point Roberts and Stuart found themselves at cross-purposes. Were they basing their case on the relatively favourable experience of the Cambridge branch, or were they talking about current prospects in London? Were they appealing to the evidence of actual Extension certificates, or were they speaking more generally of the intrinsic appeal of systematic study? In the end the witnesses managed to produce some of the statistical truth and also to lard it with hopeful expectations.[10]

On a more particular issue Stuart and Roberts had convinced themselves that there was a real ambition to win high academic honours among many working men, and so their advocacy acquired an extra urgency. When Lord Cowper asked the former Professor of Mechanism about his experience of "men in mechanical works" Stuart replied:

> the same feelings of ambition which impel you or me to take a degree if we can get it operate in that very class .... I have been surprised to see how eager many working men were to obtain a degree, knowing privately how poor a thing it often is. I was very much surprised. It is remarkable — pathetic almost.

At a later sitting of the commission Roberts added his own conviction:

> I feel very strongly on the subject. I know well from my personal experience that what Professor Stuart has said was literally true — that there are numbers of persons, working men and others, who have a

> longing for a degree; who regard it as representing great knowledge which they would like to possess.[11]

Soon afterwards one of those working men ventured to speak on behalf of his fellows. Robert Halstead from Hebden Bridge sent a memorandum to the Extension Congress of 1894 in which he explained:

> With regard to substantial recognition of work done in connection with University teaching, I think the workman needs it as much as any class of society. We ought, and many of us do, study for the love of it, but the bulk of men like knowledge none the less if linked to some tangible acknowledgement, and workmen are no exception to the rule.[12]

Halstead was on his way to becoming an important figure in the world of cooperative production. He was a fine product of the articulate, self-improving minority with which the missionaries of Extension formed such a ready relationship. It seems likely that contact with small groups of serious, studious and sometimes remarkable working men gave the democratic dons who directed the movement an exaggerated sense of what adult education might achieve. (The Oxford Extension was also affected, if in a rather different way; it suffered from a desperate optimism about its own capacity to provide the English working classes with a complete education in "citizenship".)

The open-degrees lobby believed not only that working men would come forward, but that they were prepared to study over a long period. In 1887 Roberts wrote that it was far from idealistic to expect an artisan to stay the course, and his subsequent scheme of peripatetic graduation in the Welsh university specified a period of nine years. Stuart was similarly convinced:

> I believe that by lengthening the period of such work as we have described, and by reducing the amount of final examination that he had to undergo . . . you would give a degree, and that degree would be taken and would mean as good an amount of mental cultivation as is practically got by any person who takes a degree at any University.

There was no lack of protest that the true situation was being misrepresented. The practical case for the Extension degree depended on an estimate of probability, and on the opposite side it could be said with equal authority that very few students who worked for a living

would want or would be able to survive such a challenge. In acquainting France with this project of degrees for evening students Espinas could scarcely contain his incredulity: "on ne peut s'empêcher de croire qu'il y a beaucoup d'illusion dans cette espérance".[15]

The Extension movement was caught up in a tangle of problems and its leaders were always looking for a sword to cut the knots. The open degree was only one of several weapons that were energetically recommended during the 1890s; others were Treasury grants-in-aid, a new generation of local colleges of higher education, collaboration with county and municipal authorities in providing a new system of intermediate education. In all of them the outward simplicity of the scheme belied the complexities of the situation it was supposed to fit. The older generation of staunch voluntarists, Stuart and Roberts included, came to accept the need for financial subsidy, but they never trusted that policy and they believed that it threatened to corrupt the virtues of the movement they had built up. Their alternative of open graduation was the most extreme form of what Roberts' biographer described as the "sacrificial" theory of adult education.

University Extension was dominated by the aptly labelled philosophy of "evangelical humanism". Its leaders regarded education, or education next to religion, according to their proclivities, as the highest form of private and collective experience. Roberts' personal interpretation of this doctrine was that the student body had a duty patiently to match up to the demands imposed upon it by the "university". Naturally high standards demanded a sacrifice of time and energy. There is no evidence that he or his supporters held that financial sacrifice was itself a virtue, but in the circumstances it unavoidably became part of their case. Thus the sacrificialists thought themselves into the conviction that if the universities made the fullest demands of their extramural audiences, and also offered the fullest acknowledgment, the people of the country would respond. The educational problem of Extension would be solved within the existing financial dispensation, and the movement would become a national institution. To express Roberts' philosophy in these terms is to bring out the peculiar integration of his concerns as an administrative officer and a cultural prophet.

That single-mindedness was the cause of his eventual frustration. Roberts pinned his ideals completely to an inadequate organisational form — the Extension system as he had always known it — and so

committed himself to a paradox. He had to spend years arguing that Extension's failure held the key to success. As later and vehement critics were to point out, he became unable to conceive of any way of inspiring people with a desire for real education except through the paraphernalia of examinations and paper awards. He believed in education and not certificates, but the certificates had to serve as his "lever". If Roberts had enjoyed a sardonic turn of humour he might have adopted Lord Salisbury's dictum:

> Actual authority we cannot exercise .... The only form of control we have is that which is called moral influence, which in practice is a combination of nonsense, objurgation and worry .... We must devote ourselves to the perfecting of this weapon.[14]

A marketable commodity?

From the point of view of the first part of this chapter the primary purpose of the open university was not to give students a material privilege that was being denied to them, but to persuade more of them to accept the high aspirations set by the leaders of the movement. It was an illustration of the principle once explained in the editorial columns of the *University Extension Journal*: "the Movement is one from above downwards — from the Universities to the people — and not from below upwards".[15] The significance of the scheme lay in the manipulation of a symbol, and so the one issue that had to be ruled out of court was what actual use there might be in a degree for Extension students. It would have "a decided value" according to Roberts, and in Halstead's opinion working men loved the pursuit of knowledge "none the less if linked to some tangible acknowledgement"; neither chose to explore the social implications of what he was saying. The occupational or material significance of degree-getting was of no interest to these educational idealists and so they talked as if it could be ignored.

The second London university commission touched briefly on the problem. Lord Cowper to Roberts:

> broadly the distinction of a University degree has meant mainly two things; first, a continuous period of concentration and devotion solely to intellectual pursuits; and, secondly, the possession of a professional qualification, or at any rate the basis of a professional qualification, such as in medicine, in the Church, or in the learned professions.

> University extension does not appear to me quite to meet either of those, and that is the distinction between it and the degree course .... How far would that seem to you to be a just distinction?

Roberts evaded the distinction altogether, choosing instead to reply that the existence of the London degree was a contradiction of the first part of his lordship's argument. This purism was fairly represented in another contemporary comment in the *Journal* that Extension had little to do with "raising the market value of the individual".[16]

That was perhaps a praiseworthy sentiment, but it became very problematical once Extension proposed to intervene, in effect if not in intention, in the market process. Part of the difficulty lay in the doctrine of liberal education and the way in which it had been adapted to the social evolution of the nineteenth century. The liberal theory was presented in purely educational terms (and it would be redundant to refer here to those classic Victorian documents in which the case was made), and yet the liberal practice had definite occupational and social functions. A university education in the Oxbridge mould was a direct professional training for schoolmasters and parsons and public servants, occupations in which awkward questions about specialist technique disappeared in the solvent of talk about character and personal qualities. The higher reaches of journalism and the law required a certain amount of special expertise, but even there it was argued that the essence of the man's training was his ordinary university education. A liberal education came to serve as a new warrant of gentility in a rapidly expanding middle class and for those who had only their brains and intellectual skills by which to recommend themselves. A university training and a university degree, even in apparently non-utilitarian subjects, became an increasingly important part of the process of social recruitment.

In the social conditions of the 1890s a policy of open degrees on easy terms must have seemed to many people utopian to the point of foolish irresponsibility. What would all these new graduates (supposing they came forward) do with their credentials? Of course Roberts, Moulton and Stuart did not intend that they should do anything with them, they were interested only in the process by which they were acquired.

The reformers showed a disregard of social emulation only to find themselves accused of inciting it. "The labour market is already overstocked with graduates of ordinary attainments", declared Mackinder

and Sadler in 1891, and University Extension, "while furnishing men and women, of all ranks and ages, with stimulus and guidance in elevating studies . . . must not seek to inspire unsuitable persons with an ambition for callings for which they are not intellectually fitted". Some time later when the London Society's claims on the new university were being discussed the Oxford *Gazette* amplified the point. Certain occupations had an aura of "social glamour", partly because of the status attaching to them, partly because they offered intellectual satisfactions which many coveted but which few could find in their everyday lives. The result was that people were pulled or pushed into wanting work that was in short supply and for which they were not fitted. Adult education must have no part in this unhappy process; rather its purpose was to make intellectual satisfaction more freely available so as to destroy "the inducement which tempts so many away from their more appropriate occupations".[17]

It is significant that in flirting with their B.A. (Univ. Ext.) Mackinder and Sadler obviously understood the problem to be one of a controlled widening of opportunity. They were already becoming interested in educational affairs as an aspect of social policy, an emphasis that became clearer as their careers developed, and the tendency of their various writings on this subject was meritocratic. Although they conceived their University Extension College as a hospitable adult education centre for a whole town and district, its special function, with the aid of the B.A. (Univ. Ext.), was to act as a filter, catching the small minority of marked but neglected talent and passing it on to the real university for final polishing and accreditation.

The same reservations caused Professor Tout of the Victoria Extension committee to challenge the wisdom of the Extension Congress of 1894. While the majority appeared to be clamouring for more systematic courses and degrees through evening study he argued that extramural education was concerned to stir up cultural interests, not to produce a glut of "students" filled with unrealistic expectations. An apparently high-minded educational policy could serve simply "to turn a good workman or clerk into a bad schoolmaster".[18]

The complaints have a weary familiarity, but it would be wrong to dismiss Mackinder, Sadler or Tout as simply defending the privileges of the educated class. Some years ago a sharp and inconclusive quarrel broke out in the scholarly press as to whether professional work was in short supply during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The claim

that there was a general shrinking of opportunity does not stand proper examination, but certain interesting facts remain. After 1881 there was a marked decline in the recruitment of clergymen, barristers and schoolmasters; these occupations continued to expand but at a much slower rate than in previous years, and more slowly than the nonmanual occupations overall. There was work to be had provided a graduate was willing to migrate to the colonies or to one of the less genteel trades; but in the occupations familiar to young men with liberal Oxbridge prejudices opportunity was less open, and that in a situation of increasing university output. And it has been suggested that from the 1870s it also became more difficult for the middle classes to maintain the social differentials to which they had become accustomed through a rapidly increasing standard of living over the previous quarter of a century.[19]

The complaint of "overcrowded professions" has been ridiculed as a traditional piece of mystification and symptom of the guild mentality; but that may be to ignore the inner complexities of the problem. It may also be to ignore the significance of what people thought was the case at the time; perhaps professional men believed in an occupational depression just as much as businessmen believed in a Great Depression of trade and industry.

Whatever the truth, Extensionists seemed generally to share the view that it was wrong to encourage people who might start to pine for work outside their social or intellectual competence. A telling example occurs in the correspondence of John Churton Collins, distinguished man of letters and one of the London Society's most esteemed lecturers. In 1888 he wrote to one of his Toynbee Hall students:

> I understand you to say that you wish to get work as a teacher of English Literature at Institutes and schools in London, and for that purpose, or for the purpose of preparing yourself for such work, you contemplate quitting your present post. Let me exhort you to think very seriously before you take this step. Remember that it is extremely difficult to obtain teaching work, for each place which may be open there will probably be a hundred applicants, the greater proportion being University men with the advantage perhaps of a high degree; it is a path of life in which the supply far exceeds the demand. If you took elementary literary teaching, which is, of course, easier to obtain, I am afraid you would find it very irksome and depressing.[20]

Collins, it should be added, had a good deal of experience of piecing together a livelihood from such teaching engagements.

Other fragments of his correspondence reveal a man who habitually contrasted ambition and aspiration, and preferred the latter. His vision of adult education was that a student should patiently and honourably meet the obligations of his working and domestic life, and in his leisure time pursue cultivation through learning. He warned his Toynbee Hall correspondent against inflated ambition and advised him to stick to his last and tend his literary interests in his spare time, adding examples of eminent scholarship attained in after-hours. Collins made himself the champion of the classless and non-utilitarian ideal of a people's university; in two popular articles, "The universities in contact with the people" (1889) and "A university for the people" (1899), for example he faithfully echoed the ideas that Roberts had been putting forward.[21]

The appeal to leisure was a necessary part of the case for the open university. Moulton made the point with his typical insistence: "To be without work in life is selfishness and sloth. To be without leisure is slavery".[22] Society was beginning to recognise the dignity of leisure, and Extension was on hand to infuse the seriousness that made it worth while. Similarly Stuart told the Gresham Commission:

> there is no doubt that the employed classes are gradually getting more leisure, and want to get it. Then you want to give them the opportunity of employing the time well. I have kept off the social aspect of this University, but its social effect may be extremely great . . . . It may give that innocent employment of leisure which everybody must desire to see, and that leisure will be filled up in some way if it is not filled up in this way.[23]

He was replying to a sly question from Canon Browne: "Has not a working man in his leisure hours much more time than a large number of undergraduates of either University devote to work?"

Nevertheless the argument from leisure did not uniquely favour those who wanted Extension degrees; it could be turned to exactly the opposite effect. A correspondent in the *Gazette* suggested that the requirements would be so onerous as to distort the working, social and family lives of those who sought the degree. The student body would be divided by the creation of a group who saw the results of their efforts as a "marketable commodity"; the pleasure of learning would become a burden and the

idea of study as a life-long pursuit would be undermined.[24]

The opposition to the projected open university was largely one of social realism, reflecting a view of the likely practical consequences and not a reading of its sponsors' professed educational ideals. Those sponsors had no mind to interfere in the process of social recruitment; they were social reformers, but their mission was on a higher plane altogether. Evangelical humanism was above class, utility and social emulation. In one sense the argument about Extension degrees was about concrete means, and had little to do with underlying philosophy.

For Sadler and the Oxford school of University Extension the upward path was made not from the gritty material of systematic study but from the more elastic stuff of moral inspiration; nevertheless it led in the same direction. Extension was a reform movement, Sadler assured an Oxford audience in 1892, but it must provide "an education not of the intellect so much as the heart — (applause) — and it must aim at moral discipline more than technical equipment, and set before its students, as their ideal, elevation of character, not elevation of rank". A quotation from John Ruskin now happily fell into place, and that wayward master's system of political economy provided Sadler with a specification for the better ordering of society. Adult education did not seek to multiply the stock of genius but to create "an atmosphere of happy study and refinement and delight in beautiful things". Working people were demanding and would have more leisure, the task was to bring it to them "safely and quickly". Every town must have its centre for Extension, a place for reading, study and discussion, and "one of the best enemies to the present public house".[25]

Those who made the Extension movement preached and practised the "politics of conscience".[26] They believed in duty, reconciliation and an order of rationality above material and class interests; for them adult education was to be a meeting of minds, not on neutral but on higher ground. They were prone to all the old-time philanthropists' worries about what the common people were doing with their surplus income and their spare time, and they are easy prey for our latter-day theorists of "social control".

There is a most revealing passage in Albert Grey's address to the education conference of 1884 at which the demand for a radically extended university was first aired. That year found Extension on one of its peaks of optimism. With the help of hard work and the mysterious

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workings of social receptivity Cambridge had stimulated a movement for higher education among the colliery workers of Northumberland; lecture centres were set up in a number of pit villages and a coordinating committee under working-class control was established. At a time when a further widening of the franchise was in prospect this self-improving seriousness among some of the least regarded members of society had to be a matter of note.

Grey was concerned to explain the inner meaning of the Northumberland experiment. It was in fact one of his pitmen acquaintances who provided him with the theory: working people were cut off from "society" by an intellectual gap, they were at the bottom of a social heap because they were at the bottom of an educational scale. Grey quoted at length from an account his coal miner had written:

> education is the very thing that will open the gates to higher society, and will call the hitherto dormant faculties into play .... The leaders of the University Extension movement in this district have firmly grasped the following truth:– The constant flow of working men into the middle classes is not due so much to a desire to acquire wealth as to find suitable society. Those who are head and shoulders above their class can only remain in that class at the expense of the loss of all companionship .... Those who would pull their class forward, and would contribute materially to the increase of the world's wealth, betake themselves to another sphere and are heard of no more. This flow would not continue if the educational facilities were such as should enable the whole class to move forward simultaneously.[27]

The writer must have believed that the chances of work, wealth and rank should be regarded as nothing more than chances; that the regulatory principle of the true community, into which working people could enter just as much as anyone else, was cultivation. Thus it was educational opportunity above all that needed to be redistributed. It was naive perhaps, but very close to what the coal miners' patrons believed.

In one of his earliest published addresses James Stuart deplored the "isolated individualism" of English life and its widening "grievous class distinctions". Part of the answer lay in building social institutions that rose above class, and he suggested that one such was a system in which a group of people of all conditions could study under the guidance of one teacher, a teacher whose life was given to the nonpartisan love of

knowledge. When three years later the Local Lectures began to take shape classlessness was an important part of their doctrine. Propagandists were pleased to report that even if manufacturers and workmen did not quite literally rub shoulders in the lecture halls they did so figuratively in Extension's examination pass lists.[28]

Moulton and Roberts had known this movement since its early days and they continued to refine its philosophy. Roberts described adult education as a process of personal cultivation running side by side with the student's necessary involvement in the workaday world. In an earlier passage I introduced his vision of the young man who was serving his apprenticeship and in his spare time following Extension courses, and who in his early twenties would be master of his trade and a thoroughly cultivated fellow into the bargain. Moulton followed a similar ideal, setting out from the flat (and crucially incomplete) assertion that "higher education has no market value".[29]

The problem of "raising" was, he explained to his American audiences, commonly misunderstood. To most people it meant climbing the pyramid of social status. However legitimate that ambition might be in other respects, it had nothing to do with adult education since University Extension had no concern with social class: "It has to do with a far more important mode of 'rising' in life, — that of rising in the rank to which a man happens to belong for the moment, whether it be the rank in which he started or any other". The movement to which he had devoted himself was destined to become a totally open institution for "in the intellectual pursuits that belong to leisure there is no bar to the equality of all, except the differences of individual capacity and desire". He was willing to stand accused of educational communism but preferred a spiritual analogy; in religious life it was accepted that people of all conditions might mingle on a footing of equality, and the basis of University Extension was "the growing recognition of education as a permanent human interest akin to religion".[30]

When the disputants on both sides of the question have been allowed to declare that adult education had nothing to do with the market place or with "rising" in the vulgar sense a tantalising question still remains. Would an Extension degree have released a new surge of materialistic motivation and what difference might it have made to English higher education? The examination virus was well established in the nation's bloodstream but the diploma disease was not fully developed. There

have been studies in plenty of the growth of university and professional education in the later nineteenth century, yet the general sociology of the degree is still rather obscure. In a trivial sense there was an equilibrium of supply and demand; what we do not know is how many of the excluded of those days would have valued degrees had they been able to get them.

The topic is riddled with uncertainties. One of them emerged in the campaign of 1895 to have women admitted to Oxford degrees. The advocates made widespread enquiries among those acquainted with the problem of educated female employment in order to support their case; in the end they were unable to produce clear evidence of disadvantages to women resulting from their not having a degree itself. Knowledge that a woman had been educated at Oxford was said to be sufficient. The demand for admission to degrees was moral rather than utilitarian; women outside Oxford were keenly interested in the outcome since capitulation by the University would have been an acknowledgment of the equality of the female intellect.[31]

The case of University Extension is more obscure, for there is also the question of whether the actual education it provided was even recognised as a form of higher training by the outside world. The deepest silence in the history of the abortive Extension degree is that of the students themselves. It is a mystery whether there was or was not a lobby of students who wanted admission to a new degree either as a recognition of their intellectual status or for more mundane reasons. Was the whole thing dreamed up by theorists and administrators? On a lower plane it is difficult to say whether people expected the existing Extension awards to have any utility. It is not impossible however, for there was a small number of well-documented special cases.

After 1892 the Education Department agreed to recognise senior Extension awards (the Cambridge Affiliation and the Oxford Vice-Chancellor's) as the equivalent of a degree for the purposes of admission to recognised teacher status and to the official Certificate examinations for elementary teaching. Even those who arranged this concession did not expect it to be of much practical importance, and it seems not to have been. Much more important was the recognition at the same time of certain sessional Extension courses in the pupil-teacher curriculum. The Department allowed marks obtained in the Extension examinations to count towards the Queen's Scolarship examination, the competitive

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test on which admission to the training colleges and to full certification depended. The dispensation greatly stimulated the formation of special pupil-teacher courses and centres; this work was really an expedient addition to the normal Extension programme which took advantage of the shabby state of teacher training. It had little relevance to the wider question of "recognition".

The periodicals carried occasional notices that someone had obtained an appointment of the strength of holding Extension certificates. At one point two hundred firms belonging to the London Chamber of Commerce offered to show special consideration to young men who had taken London certificates.[32] With these exceptions the records are silent.

To suspect that Extension students might have wanted to make some practical use of their awards is perhaps to look at the past too much in terms of the present. And yet the contemporary alarum about false aspirations suggests that the temptation did exist. Was there any connection between formal adult education and social and occupational mobility in the later nineteenth century? This particular field of self-improvement may turn out to have been thinly populated territory, but it is one that has not yet been properly explored.

6
Opening other doors

A Cambridge external diploma

Early in 1895 Roberts returned to Cambridge and for the next seven years gave most of his time to the administration of the Local Lectures. Although he had by no means abandoned his search for "university recognition" nothing more was to be heard from him about degrees for Extension students. The new university for London hung fire. There was little point in taking on Cambridge almost single-handed, and in any case he had never phrased his proposals as a direct challenge to that particular University. What he now did was to produce a compromise in the shape of an "external diploma".

Roberts went back to what he described as a state of crisis. Since 1891 the Oxford and Cambridge Extension authorities had thrown themselves with too little foresight into providing the kind of technical courses that could attract grants from county councils under the recent Local Taxation Act, the "Whisky Money" that is. For some time there was an artificial boom in the universities' Extension provision; then when the counties no longer needed, or no longer valued such help and began to withdraw their grants disruption followed. Cambridge seems to have been the worse affected. The Syndicate's emphasis on long courses and systematic study made heavy demands on the organising power of the local committees and the voluntary secretaries, and it was thought that in many places the easy money of the technical instruction years had sapped their determination. The Local Lectures entered a period of more than usual uncertainty.

Roberts produced his usual answer. A national system of higher education could be established and given credibility if the central authorities would declare "a fixed goal in the way of University recognition". In the first of his resumed reports to Syndicate he suggested a diploma for external students, diplomatically adding that it was as much as part-time students could be expected to attain. The wording of his report suggests that the drafting was already well advanced. A year later

he was still pressing his demand, urging the Syndics to grasp this opportunity of dominating the country's emerging system of education outside the schools, and underlining "the extreme importance of such a step at the present time".[1]

The urgent reference to national policy seems to have been stimulated by Sir John Gorst's Education Bill of 1896 which was still before the Commons when Roberts wrote his second report. The measure offered enlarged powers to the county councils, and according to some optimists promised to deliver the future of intermediate education into the hands of University Extension. The local authorities would be able to support teaching in arts subjects as the limitations of the technical instruction acts were removed; the way seemed wide open for the founding of local institutes of advanced education in which the Extension committees could find a permanent and financially comfortable home. The prospect of renewed subsidies on better terms encouraged the lecturing staff to join in. A scheme for an extramural diploma was put forward on behalf of several of the teaching staff, in which occupational self-interest was well to the fore. (Indeed the file on the abortive diploma discussions of 1896–98 is unusual for the clarity with which it reveals the material considerations dictating an appeal to higher principle.) The staff needed a better assurance of work and the answer was to encourage permanent local institutions in which public money and university prestige combined to mutual advantage. But the policy would succeed only if Cambridge allowed some of its gold dust to rub off. The privilege of affiliation must be extended and students in the new colleges must be able to win, without the trouble of residence, a worthwhile academic title such as "A.U.C." (Associate of the University of Cambridge).[2] A special diploma committee was now appointed to consider the lecturers'and other submissions.

The future of the Exeter Extension College was also brought into the reckoning. The principal wrote to Roberts that his students were not much attracted to the existing Cambridge Local Examinations and preferred what London offered. The purpose of a new diploma must be to bring the provinces back into orbit around Cambridge and success would depend on "how openly the degree equivalent could be recognised". The principal believed that if the award were given an easily abbreviated title there would be letters for people to put after their names and the absence of an actual degree would be of little account — provided always that the letters were awarded by the University of Cambridge. On the

other hand the principal of University College, Nottingham simply repeated the view that seems to have prevailed there from the beginning. If his students were admitted to the regular tripos examinations they would be delighted, but otherwise they would continue to prefer a London degree to anything less that Cambridge might condescend to offer.[3]

Exeter still had a good deal of ground to make up in comparison with Nottingham and Roberts was reassured by students and committee members that there was much interest in a diploma. Jessie Montgomery, the energetic local secretary who had done so much to bring the College into existence, wrote that "cases are constantly cropping up of students wanting an objective to work for. If you can get any kind of diploma it would be an enormous stimulus to our work".[4] But Clayden, the principal, was taking no chances; if a diploma were introduced he would offer a complete programme of study leading up to it, if not there was no choice but immediately to advertise classes in whatever parts of the London degree curriculum he could manage.

A third consideration was almost certainly the revival of the degrees-for-women question. In 1895 the women's party at Oxford had decided to renew their claims. The Cambridge reformers, although unprepared and somewhat at odds among themselves, were under pressure to do the same, and then to persist despite the failure of the Oxford demand. The old antagonisms came to life once more, but in the early phases of the discussion there seemed to be considerable support for change. The women's party was rather carelessly assuming that the question was one of academic detail and no longer whether the privilege should be given at all.[5] It was in this atmosphere that the idea of an external diploma was first put forward.

Unfortunately the air became thoroughly poisoned. A special syndicate set up to study the problem agreed that some academic title should be conferred on women who were successful in the tripos examinations, but was divided on what the title ought to be. When a majority report recommended that women should be admitted to the titles of B.A and M.A. opposition hardened. In some quarters a sense of outrage was cultivated and the less scrupulous members of the opposition were prepared to resort to scare-mongering and to inflaming the prejudices of the undergraduates. The provincial press wondered that an academic community could work itself into such a feverish state and indulge in such obvious contortions of logic. The degree proposals were defeated on

voting day, 21 May 1897, amid scenes of unedifying disorder.

Meanwhile the Syndicate for Local Lectures and Examinations was committeed to its own plan for a further extension of the University in defiance of the mood of the day. Late in 1897 the plan was published, a rather elaborate scheme combining Higher Locals, Extension sessional certificates and a new final examination to be offered through the Locals system. Successful candidates would receive a Diploma in Arts of Cambridge University. The award was intended to be widely available and not tied to particular institutions. Its curriculum embodied the theory if not the name of the old degrees-through-Extension plan; for instance "the latitude allowed in regard to the time over which the Preliminary and Intermediate work may be spread" was a deliberate concession to the needs of older students.[6]

When the Syndicate's proposal was put before the University the usual paper warfare broke out; this was clearly not a casual piece of business to be left to those who took a special interest in the Local Lectures. It could not have escaped the notice of Cambridge men that a minor agency of the University was asking to be allowed to give students in any part of the country, women included, an academic title when women students resident at Cambridge had just been told that they were not to enjoy any title even when they had passed a regular tripos examination.

At a preliminary discussion in April 1898 there was much anxiety that misunderstanding would be created. Just what was it that external candidates might obtain? Was it a degree? Syndicate quickly prepared a supplementary statement; it conceded that "D.A. (Camb.)" might be mistaken for a degree, and assured the University that it did not ask for any formal title to be given to external students. Successful candidates would no doubt wish to signify that they had won an official award, and to do so by quoting something less cumbersome than the full name; the regulations would therefore include a notice that the only permitted abbreviation would be "Camb. Dipl. Arts".[7]

The Syndicate knew what was at stake and in this rather contrived accommodation found itself playing a game with which the friends of women's education had a long familiarity. In 1887/8 the women's party had adopted the expedient of distinguishing the title of the degree from the degree itself, and had asked simply that Newnham and Girton students should be eligible for the "title" of B.A. The purpose was to reassure the opposition that women did not wish to become M.A.s and

so intrude into the exclusively male government of the University. The syndicate of 1896/7 also suggested admission to the title of degrees, but the stratagem was interpreted not as modesty but as the thin end of a wedge. In the aftermath of that last fiasco, and even though there was no suggestion at all that external students should acquire membership of the University, the Local Lectures people were forced into obfuscation about "letters". The historian of female education at Cambridge has a pungent comment on this technique of distinguishing between a degree and its title. It exhibited, she writes, "the art of making simple things difficult", an art that had long flourished in the University.[8]

Although a number of distinguished names appeared in support of a Camb. Dipl. Arts, there was strong opposition. The *Oxford Magazine* joined in too, congratulating the guardians of academic integrity and suggesting that the demand came from a few organisers in an Extension movement which was in general quite indifferent.[9] In the circumstances the diploma scheme was probably doomed in advance; Senate put it to rest with the *non placet* of 26 May 1898.

On 27 May one of the leading members of the Cambridge voluntary wing wrote to Roberts to say that the vote was a blow to "the forward movement in the University"; she wondered whether it had anything to do with the "degree business" of the previous May. Before long Roberts also learned of Miss Montgomery's "bitter disappointment"; the diploma, she pointed out, "would have been worth an endowment almost to us — & would have worked in all kinds of directions". She hoped that Roberts would persist.[10]

Success of a kind

As far as Cambridge was concerned there was nothing for Roberts to persist with, but there was a hope that at long last something might be achieved in London. After the appearance of the Gresham Commission's report there were two unsuccessful attempts to secure legislation on a new university for London. Then R. B. Haldane with the help of Sidney Webb produced a new Bill and began to mobilise political support; it was adopted by the government and after the complete collapse of its opponents was passed without a division and the University of London Act became law in August 1898.

The measure, which some considered a dangerous novelty, appointed

the necessary parliamentary commissioners and spelled out the general principles to which they were to give effect. To the delight of the Extensionists and the disquiet of the major colleges it required the commissioners to provide for the recognition of teaching and not simply of institutions. By proper procedure anyone teaching in a public educational institution within thirty miles of the University buildings could be recognised whether or not the place he worked in was a constituent school. Those who matriculated and studied under approved teachers were to be accepted as internal candidates for degrees. The Act appeared to provide for a class of noncollegiate students not subject to requirements of full-time or continuous study.

This generosity was to turn out to be an illusion. The *Extension Journal* prematurely announced that the Act opened several routes by which adult students could proceed to degrees, for example by attending recognised evening courses parallel to the normal daytime courses, or by presenting Extension certificates and then taking the final examinations along with regular internal students.[11] In fact in their statutes and regulations the commissioners produced a narrower interpretation. The only gesture towards open education was the requirement that no disability should be placed on internal students who had followed only evening courses. The principle of the recognition of teaching was easily bent into a recognition of institutional claims. Even more important was the rule that an internal candidate must pursue his courses *continuously* over the "full period" of study.[12] That was the fatal decision as far as the Extensionists were concerned. Too late the essence of their plan was revealed: not that the Extension degree was to be "extramural", but that it was to be earned through part-time credits of teaching and examination offered on a very flexible basis.

The point was driven home by the commissioners' offering extramural work an entirely conventional recognition and keeping it firmly in its place. As instructed, the statute-makers set up a standing board for University Extension, but at the same time limited it to advising Senate on "the admission to any of the privileges of matriculated Students (other than that of proceeding to a degree) of any persons who may have profited by such teaching".[13]

For Roberts himself there was an important consolation. It was almost inevitable that he would be appointed Registrar to the new Board to Promote the Extension of University Teaching and he returned to this,

his last post, in 1902. Typically he went back to London with a detailed plan of campaign for systematic and continuous study. But time had passed and the emphasis was changing. The statutes of London University closed alternative routes to graduation and Roberts now found good reason to argue that he wanted university recognition but not university degrees; he was also beginning to shift his attention from all-round education to more specialised study at a high level.

During his first session back in London he introduced a scheme of broad liberal study leading to a Vice-Chancellor's Certificate; it was an inventive and well-organised curriculum in history, literature and the principles of intellectual method spread over a three- or four-year period. Then in 1905 he turned to higher things, adding the Chancellor's Certificate in the Humanities, which a holder of the first award could obtain by completing a further year of specialised study.[14] Conditions in London were increasingly favourable to this kind of development. Sessional courses, many of them of an advanced character and held in central London, became an increasingly important part of the Board's provision, and Roberts was able to claim with more credibility than in earlier years that certification was having a marked effect on the quality of Extension studies.

The new drive for recognition was explained in his final apologia, a Cambridge summer meeting address of 1908 published as *University Extension under the Old and the New Conditions*. Roberts' preface to the pamphlet explained what he was about:

> for thirty-three out of the thirty-five years that have elapsed since the first courses of University Extension lectures were delivered I have been intimately connected with the movement from the inside .... What I have tried to do is to discover what are the essential, as distinguished from the accidental, features of the movement which we know as University Extension used in its narrower sense, and what is the place it rightly occupies in the larger movement of University Extension — of University Reform — which has been slowly but surely advancing during the past half century.[15]

He admitted that the growth of new universities and the introduction of local authority scholarships had transformed the old problem of access. He acknowledged that the pattern of undergraduate studies was firmly fixed, and that people of mature years found no particular attraction

in it or in the degree that came at the end of it. The modern expression of old Extension ideals was the desire to study an attractive subject intensively and for its own sake, to pursue it to "higher and higher stages" and win self-assurance as "an independent enquirer". The adult student with only "scanty leisure" could have no patience with the "smattering of many subjects" that so often passed for the general education of the young undergraduate. Roberts' accommodation to reality was transparently obvious, but it was nevertheless dignified.

Still the old ambiguities bedevilled his argument. Committed study was what Extension was all about, but committed students would not be forthcoming unless the university offered a "valued recognition"; something was needed to "touch the imagination". Roberts suggested that a diploma would do just that and reported that moves were being made to establish one in London.

Perhaps spontaneously or perhaps on the prompting of the Extension Registrar a group of students who were working for the Chancellor's Certificate had put forward earlier in 1908 a plea for the fuller recognition of their efforts. It was to lead to a successful and durable "Diploma in the Humanities", though not without a number of interesting diversions. In his summer meeting address Roberts offered a rather contrived account of what was going on. The petitioners, he declared, had no desire as Extension students to obtain degrees; they were interested in advanced study and wanted some incentive to stiffen their resolve. The authority intended to offer an award equal to but different from a degree:

> The driving power behind the degree course is the desire to obtain a professional qualification; the driving power behind the course of study we are now considering is an interest in some subject of study which will be stimulated and increased as the student enters deeper and deeper into the subject and becomes more and more absorbed in it.

The universities' conception of a proper undergraduate curriculum was so hidebound that none of them was likely to accept a scheme such as the Chancellor's Certificate as qualifying a person to take a degree. The answer was to promote the certificate to diploma status, as testimony of advanced study in a limited range of subject matter, and that could be done "almost by a stroke of the pen".[18]

Roberts quoted from what the certificate students had said, but he selected so as to reinforce the picture of disinterested searchers after

knowledge. The memorial itself produces rather a different impression. The authors pointed out that they valued their work for its own sake, and then went on:

> it has come to be an increasingly dominant principle in modern life, that if work is to be recognised by the outside world it must be stamped and marked by a definite award .... The Certificate has as yet no reputation, and the very name Certificate (which is used to describe awards of most varying degrees of value) in itself not only fails to give any adequate conception of what the work means, but is taken to imply that the work is not of much importance.

The whole question was of particular interest to teachers, "to whom professional standing is an important consideration". The Extension Board was asked to introduce a diploma and seek recognition of it from the Board of Education and other public authorities. Furthermore the memorialists asked for direct, nongraduate admission to study for higher degrees.[17] Here at last were the hints of utility that were missing from the debates of fifteen years before.

If Roberts concealed the utilitarian character of the diploma proposal he also misled his audience as to its acceptability. The submission on access to higher degrees was rejected outright as contrary to custom and statute. Although Dr Roberts reminded his Board that Oxford had introduced diplomas for advanced study in a single subject, the members were more impressed with the danger of confusion with postgraduate professional awards. All they would consider was dropping the words "University Extension" from the title of certain certificates in arts subjects.[18]

A deputation of certificate students called on the Board, but the subsequent decision to institute a diploma had little to do with their efforts. During the autumn of 1908 it was learned that the London County Council had voted £500 in aid of a scheme of advanced study in English literature for evening students at King's and that the college was proposing to introduce a diploma of its own. The Board concluded of course that the situation had now changed entirely, and recalled that the Oxford diplomas were not limited to professional subjects. It immediately began to press for a general set of diploma regulations that would supersede the King's scheme and accommodate evening students in colleges and Extension courses equally.[19]

Still hankering after his national university, Roberts had hoped that units of a diploma curriculum might be recognised in any place or institution where adequate teaching was offered; he also proposed that the award should be available to university students following a shorter, full-time programme so that its academic status would be beyond question. As always he got less than he hoped for. In 1909/10 the first courses leading to the Diploma in the Humanities began, in literature, history, and economics and social studies. Lectures and classes were provided in central London and on an extramural basis only; the very heavy demands of paper work and examination prevented the appearance of that (illusory) army of serious and committed Extension students.[20] Roberts lived long enough to see the scheme introduced, but not long enough to be present at the conferment of the first thirty-eight diplomas.

A new movement of adult education

Roberts' biographer believed that his subject did live long enough to fear that he had failed in two respects: first to convince the universities of the value of Extension, and secondly to grasp the significance of the new movement in adult education.[21] Ben Bowen Thomas argued reasonably enough that the Extensionists had come to confuse dynamism and commitment with educational system and efficient administration; they looked at things too much from an official university standpoint.

Try as he might Roberts was losing the initiative during the last years of his life. The new "movement", soon to be known as the Workers' Educational Association, took shape in 1903 as a benign growth within the body of University Extension; it was devised to solve the problem that had always defeated its host, to put a genuine higher education within the reach of working men and women. The W.E.A. quickly gathered strength as an independent body, and was able to call forth participatory energy that Extension had not known for many years. The Association and its friends in high places soon decided that traditional ideas and methods were themselves a bar to progress. A new form of provision, the "tutorial class", was developed. Funds were scraped together to allow working people to take part in this uncompromising school of higher education, and the old apparatus of mass lectures and the anodyne of entertainment were simply dispensed with. Another innovation was the ruling that tutorial classes, to be effective, must

be provided through "joint committees" in which the universities and representatives of working-class bodies collaborated on equal terms.[22] This was a new and more intrusive kind of voluntarism; the direction of the "movement" was different and at least in part was from below upwards. The local Extension committees were in principle independent, but very few of them found any purpose in life beyond acting as agents for the universities' lecture programmes; the voluntary wing played no part in the central government of Extension. It was little wonder that J. A. R. Marriott, the Oxford secretary of the day, warned the Extension Delegates that the attitudes and tactics of the W.E.A. were threatening to subvert their authority. Somewhat dramatically in Oxford and then with rather less fuss in Cambridge and London the new polity of joint committees was introduced. Other universities and colleges with little previous distinction in extramural education became eager to join in.

Its important stylistic and organisational innovations apart, the tutorial-class movement was still the offspring of the apparently outdated doctrinal system of University Extension. From the start Albert Mansbridge, the founder of the W.E.A., insisted that universal elementary education had laid only a thin "veneer" on the working classes, and that the outer achievements of political democracy meant nothing in the absence of a solid core of right thinking. The churchmen and dons who gave him support were the up-to-date interpreters of an older philosophy. The more hot-headed or proletarian members of the Association might regard Extension as the home of bourgeois historians and other condescending reactionaries, but they too accepted that knowledge and cultivation existed in their own right. (Hence the necessity, as one might say, for the antithesis to the W.E.A. It came with the founding of the Plebs League and the Labour College movement. Plebs held that the W.E.A. was a front organisation of the universities; as Marxians they stood by the doctrine that there could be no objective knowledge independent of the historical dialectic of class confrontation.)

The promoters of the tutorial class idea believed that if adult education were to serve serious and responsible working people it must be an education for life. Although learning must throw light on earning it had nothing to do with merely "getting on" in the world. The workman did not need education so that he could move out of his class; the task was through education to move a whole class forward. The new rhetoric must have reminded some of the old hands of what the Northumberland

coal-miner students had been saying over twenty years before, and the philosophy was of course much older than that. Purism survived but with an ironic twist. Disapproval began to fall on the formalism of examinations and paper testimonials that the Extensionists had always accepted as a perfectly normal part of a liberal education; but the opposition increased only gradually and as the new philosophy matured.

The famous report of 1908 on *Oxford and Working-Class Education* was the disturbance from which the ripples of joint committees and tutorial classes began to spread across the country. It made no criticism of university examinations — quite the contrary. The committee of Oxford dons and W.E.A. nominees that produced the report took it upon itself to consider something more momentous than the mechanics of extramural provision, it was concerned to announce the next step in the long haul of university reform, and especially Oxford reform. It presented the tutorial class very much as a device for bringing working men into the intramural life of the University, for recruiting the especially able to a period of residential study.[23] These new Oxford students would, it was suggested, read for the Diploma in Economics; in order to meet the University's requirements for admission they would have to be examined for a special certificate during the course of their preparatory tutorial classes. In London Roberts used the Oxford report to strengthen his own demand for a diploma for adult students.[24]

Once established, however, the tutorial classes took on a life of their own. Several universities introduced certificates, but they seem to have held no attraction for the students, who found in what the begetter of the W.E.A. liked to call the "adventure" that the entry into knowledge was reward enough. The new movement had moral influence enough to be able to do without the nonsense and objurgation.

In London Roberts went on with his somewhat obsessive drafting of examination schemes. The pioneering days had long gone, he believed, and the need was for consolidation and as always recognition. His extreme formalism irritated the new men, who actually were pioneering again and had shown that an intellectual challenge would be taken up by men and women in the busy world when they could recognise education as a vital social force. It was knowledge, and not diplomas, that promised power and emancipation.

Four years after the Oxford report the W.E.A.'s altered thinking appeared plainly in evidence given to the Haldane Commission, which

was engaged on yet another enquiry into the state of higher education in London. The Association's slogan of the "highway" (as contrasted with the "ladder") required it to claim for working-class children a fair share of whatever education could be provided between the elementary schools and the universities. It was concerned about access to degrees, but did not treat that as one of the questions of adult education.

Adult education was rather special, and even if an ideal university were created the need for extramural education would not be diminished. According to the W.E.A. the general purpose of tutorial classes was not to recruit a minority for study inside the university, it was to allow a great many working people to enjoy an education of university standard on their own terms. The adult working-class undergraduate was an important but quite distinct case; his needs would be met by the provision of special scholarships to support him during a fairly conventional intramural career. In his oral evidence to the commission Mansbridge, the W.E.A. general secretary, predicted for the better tutorial-class groups a role of "research centres" playing an important part in the development of social, industrial and economic studies. The universities must learn to think as partners, for working-class ability and experience were more than grist to the old academic mills.[25]

Although in his youth an eager certificate-bagger, Mansbridge now took care to point out that tutorial-class students had shown no interest in diplomas and degrees. And although his own first involvements with adult education had been somewhat careerist he was now writing of the "real proof which the students give of their desire to study for self development rather than for position".[26]

The Extension Board had earlier submitted evidence to the Royal Commission in a document full of R. D. Roberts' thoughts and actual words. The tutorial classes were represented as a useful development, but real progress was identified with the Diploma in the Humanities. Up to his death in 1911 Roberts cooperated only begrudgingly with the W.E.A. and seems to have found it difficult to accept that a new movement was either necessary or actually happening. Mansbridge later acknowledged the Welshman's unstinting devotion to adult education, but clearly there had been a good deal of conflict and obstruction.[27]

When he gave his evidence to Haldane the general secretary of the W.E.A. stuck to his official brief and avoided attacking the older-established side of London's extramural work. But as always talk was

going on behind the scenes and in their final report of 1913 the commissioners showed little consideration for what Roberts had spent the last years of his life trying to achieve. The Diploma scheme was damned with faint praise, its very existence treated as proof that the Extension movement in general did not produce work acceptable to a university. The (uncertificated) tutorial classes for working people showed that extramural students would aim at the highest standards when the relationship with the university was of the right kind. Through its Joint Committee the University of London was providing "one of the most serious and important of its services to the metropolis".[28]

There is ample evidence that from 1907 the zealots of the tutorial-class philosophy engaged in deliberate denigration of University Extension and that the established leadership resented it. The new men were not likely to respond favourably to Roberts' assertions that the older movement would be revitalised if it were properly recognised by the universities. The Great War interrupted this particular conflict but it was also eventually to stimulate the newer movement's best effort. From 1917 there was being prepared one of the most revered documents in British adult education; it appeared in 1919 as the *Final Report* of the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction. The times did not favour any radical reconstruction of educational opportunity, but the report had one important effect in the way it determined the style and pattern of university extramural provision for a whole generation.

The committee dismissed the late Dr Roberts' policies and his claim that the London Diploma scheme was the signpost to the future. It rested on a "misapprehension", the *Final Report* declared, on a mistaken analogy between degrees and diplomas and on a failure to appreciate the motives of serious adult students. A degree was a means of occupational advancement and since so few members of the extramural audience were chasing that kind of ambition there could be little interest in diplomas. Paper awards were merely an expedient, and a quite inadequate measure of the seriousness or otherwise of the work undertaken.[29]

Roberts had explicitly denied any interest in vocational motives, and in a document to which the *Final Report* made ample reference. His real offence was to propose that the universities should provide a serious form of adult education directly, without the interposition of a voluntary body and without special regard for the social condition of the students.

In its eagerness to eliminate a perhaps effective rival to the tutorial-class idea the Adult Education Committee was prepared to misrepresent Roberts' views and to obfuscate the distinction between a university degree and an extramural diploma on which he had latterly come to insist.[30] It was ironic that such an unbending liberalist should have been condemned for pandering to venal motives.

7
Postscript

The *Final Report* arranged its criticisms of University Extension with telling effect and laced them with slurs *ad hominem*, but it did not greatly advance on the quieter self-criticism that had been current in the movement for a good many years past. The difference was that it was no longer thought necessary to spend much effort on devising remedies. Since the tutorial class system already appeared to have solved the problem of educational standards Extension could be left, with minor improvement, to find its own level as an auxiliary of the real adult education.

The "1919 Report" was in fact a brilliant exercise in special pleading. Originally a wide-ranging "reconstruction" enquiry into the state of the educational system seems to have been envisaged, but the Board of Education objected to intrusions into its own territory. Once the terms of reference had been trimmed to adult education "other than technical and vocational" the active members of the committee threw themselves into a single-minded advocacy of the superior claims of the W.E.A. and the tutorial classes on scarce public money and defence of the privileged participation that a voluntary association had won in the organisation of university extramural teaching. The committee was packed to bursting with exponents of the new orthodoxy and the few who formed its inner cabinet were close acquaintances who had decided long before what the future in adult education must be.[1]

Tactically as well as from conviction they were determined to show that the new movement was realising the essential in adult education. To forestall any dilution of their friends' advantages they deliberately fused three separable issues: academic standards, the special mission to the working classes, and the provision of adult education through an independent voluntary body. If that combination represented the best, as the *Final Report* insisted it did, then only the joint committee system was capable of giving it proper expression, and it must receive special treatment in the allocation of public money.

To have been too energetic about the reconstruction of University Extension would have threatened the larger strategy. It was suggested

that the older type of course, when it included properly conducted class work, should receive grant at about half the rate for tutorial classes; the justification however was to produce a general cultural leaven from which more serious efforts could rise. The universities were not encouraged to think of themselves as independent providers of adult education, and the traditional side of their work received only slender incitement to turn itself into something more appropriate to modern circumstances.

The Board of Education widened the grant-aid regulations in 1924 to allow modest support of the more thorough type of Extension course. There was little immediate effect and the old Extension movement seemed to be in a bad way. Failing commitment, as measured by amount of private study and number of examination entries, had been evident since the middle 1900s; from about 1910 the total of courses promoted and average attendances at courses both began to fall. The war seriously affected provision and a brisk recovery in 1919–21 proved only temporary.

In the final month of the Great War the secretary for Local Lectures at Cambridge, D. H. S. Cranage, had made a last appeal to the theories of his distinguished predecessor when he proposed that the University introduce a degree or its equivalent for external students.[2] The enthusiasm for "reconstruction" shaped Cranage's argument; the war had disrupted the education of many young men and in the coming years many employed people, especially schoolteachers, would be interested in improving their professional standing. If one were prepared to do without residence and teaching everything could be left to the London external system, but the experience of the leading Cambridge Extension centres suggested a better solution. He listed nine major committees across the length and breadth of England, most of them affiliated to the University, offering them as the local bases of an external degree programme. It was the last flicker of the old "national" sentiment, and it was also probably an attempt to save Extension from irrelevance.

In its traditional form of mass lectures provided through a network of voluntary committees Extension was doomed. It declined to its nadir in the early 1930s as more and more of the local centres simply wound themselves up and left the W.E.A. and the local education authorities in possession. Oxford held the last of its old-style certificate examinations in 1936, fifty years after they had been introduced; Cambridge continued to examine anyone who requested it but demand had fallen by this date

to an annual average of one candidate per centre.

Extension was not saved; for a complex of reasons it was transformed. The availability of grant aid, the ambitions of the provincial universities and especially the university colleges (which needed whatever they could get in the way of good public relations), the institutional interests of newly established extramural departments, occasional irritation at the constraining effects of the joint-committee system and its not always convincing slogan of working-class education, all these conspired to produce a new kind of provision. It was offered directly by the universities without the mediation of local voluntary bodies; it borrowed methods from the tutorial movement so that the distinction between lectures and classes became increasingly blurred. University Extension was turned into a contemporary reality and not just preserved as a memento of the 1890s. It came to stand for the relationship of the modern universities to their general public as the policy makers revived the old inclusive concept of higher adult education and tried to regain ground that had been left unoccupied during the advance of the new movement. Now, it was said, there was an increasing number of well-educated men and women in industry, commerce and the professions who should not be denied access to continued university study; social and occupational changes were producing a body of people who had to work for a living but who enjoyed some of the freedom and many of the cultural and intellectual interests that had once been confined to the leisure class.[3] An alternative had to be found to the remedial, cloth-capped image of adult education if they were to be served. These ideas came into their own with the educational boom that followed the second world war, and they provided the policy base for the great diversification of liberal and quasi-vocational provision that has taken place since then.

During the 1920s such developments were scarcely visible, and during the 1930s went on mostly unsung, offering only the beginnings of an articulate policy. It was "working-class adult education" that still had the symbolic and usually the practical upper hand. Back in the 1890s Australians, Americans, Belgians, Frenchmen, Germans, Italians and even Czechs had admired the wonderful invention of University Extension; thirty and forty years later it was the tutorial class that presented itself to the world as England's great contribution to the adult education movement.

One of the dogmas of the tutorial system was that examination and

certification were a disservice to the student and the class and quite contrary to the essential spirit of study for self-development and social progress. (In 1923 the Association of Tutorial Class Tutors resolved unanimously "that no form of examination should be held, and no sort of diploma granted in connection with any Tutorial Class".[4] By that date the Association spoke for most of those who regarded themselves as the cadre of adult education.) The obvious objection was to the introduction of an externally controlled formalism between the tutor and his students. Also, having captured adult education from the dilettante individualism of University Extension, the new men did not wish to see it slip into the hands of those who were chasing private and worldly advantage.

Vocationalism was disliked but it never seems to have been much of an issue in the period between the wars. The grant-aid regulations and the creed behind the 1919 Report forbade it, and anyway in most places the certification of extramural courses was a fossil or a dead letter. But the demand was there and continuing social change was to give it more point. The London students who petitioned for a diploma in 1908 showed a readiness to use adult education in a way that was at odds with official prescriptions. London University's Diplomas in the Humanities were given an impeccably liberal justification; to the authors of the *Final Report* they seemed to be little more than the last gasp of a discredited system. Yet they looked forward to a state of affairs that neither Roberts nor the Adult Education Committee wanted to foresee.

Under the special conditions of university extramural work in the capital certificated study held up throughout the years between the wars and showed signs of increasing attractiveness. As far as the administrators were concerned the awards were firmly classed as "nonvocational", in contrast to the various external, professional diplomas that the University introduced; the distinction was however relative and not absolute. For a time the nonvocational diplomas brought quite definite practical advantages to candidates for internal and external London degrees and to school and evening institute teachers employed by the London County Council.[5]

It was not until the late 1940s that conditions favoured this kind of development in other parts of the country. Then, when connections with a wide range of occupational groups were being fostered and vocational motivations somewhat covertly admitted, the issue of accreditation was

bound to come to the surface. Increasingly, professional and voluntary social workers, local government officers, teachers, policemen, prison officers and even trade unionists came to ask for evidence of attainment in studies that bore directly on their work and careers. The first University Extension movement had found much of its purpose in filling the gaps of the wider educational system, and its successor rediscovered the opportunity.

Somewhat hesitantly the universities began to introduce extramural certificates and diplomas, and these provided one of the notable developments of the 1950s. Some of these awards were modelled directly on the London regulations, the origins of which lay in prehistory. The Oxford Delegacy realised that it could make what might otherwise have been a questionable innovation simply by reviving its ancient power to hold examinations and award certificates. There were misgivings, even among those who adopted the new policy, and a real concern to preserve the character of liberal adult education. Whether or not they had much affection for the W.E.A. the managers of university extramural studies still belonged to the "tradition" that the tutorial class movement had fostered, with its doctrines of social purpose and disinterested study. They had learned to suspect "vocationalism" and according to the regulations under which they obtained most of their funding were not supposed to condone it. It was difficult to declare the obvious — that the world had changed since the early W.E.A. and the *Final Report* had scorned social climbing.

Not surprisingly extramural students began to ask what value they could expect from the awards that they were being offered (an echo from eighty years before) and to wonder whether they had found what might become an alternative route to graduation. The authorities were unable or unwilling to give a clear answer.[6] Received orthodoxy and the ingrained habits of life on the margin left them, with very few exceptions, unprepared and reluctant to confront the parent universities over such issues as part-time degree study, credits and exemptions. Eventually someone outside their world decided to take the initiative and cut the knot; the Open University was invented. Among the magnates of what is officially called adult education there was a feeling that the founding and lavish endowment of a new institution outside their own boundaries was a kind of treachery.

There has been too much loose talk and writing about a "Great

Tradition" in English adult education. The tradition is older and more complex than the 1919 Report or the adaptations that have subsequently been made of its philosophy. Our perceptions of the present might be enriched if we recognised the longer tradition, however flawed it might be.

The leaders of the Extension movement of the last quarter of the nineteenth century were sometimes at odds among themselves, they were sometimes blinkered, in many respects they failed. This study has provided in effect an unhappy chronicle of how a movement of great vigour and enormous optimism was forced into that marginal status that we all know to be the miserable lot of organised adult education. It is difficult to pass judgment on their open university that never was: an irrelevant fantasy dreamed up by frustrated administrators or a rallying cry against a cultural caste system? a front for the liberal mystique by which nineteenth century higher education was already sufficiently afflicted or a prescription for an educated democracy?

The idea and the debate it provoked may have been merely a freak of bygone social and educational circumstances, yet there is something familiar about the problems the Extenders faced. And there is a great deal to be respected in the boldness with which they faced them.

Notes and references

Sources and abbreviations

References to institutional records are given in simplified form. The sources are as follows:

"Cambridge": records of the Syndicates for Local Lectures (1873 to 1878) and for Local Lectures and Examinations (1878 onwards). These are held in the University Archives; where the nature of an unpublished source is not obvious the full reference (BEMS series) is given.

"London": records of the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching (1876 to 1902) and the University's Board to promote the Extension of University Teaching (1900 onwards). These are to be found in London University Library and Department of Extra-Mural Studies.

"Oxford": records of the Extension Committee of the Delegacy for Local Examinations (1878 to 1892) and the Extension Delegacy (1892 onwards), which are held in the University's Department for External Studies.

The titles of two frequently-appearing periodicals are abbreviated:

"OUEG": Oxford University Extension Gazette (1890 to 1895).

"UEJ": University Extension Journal (sponsored by London and Cambridge 1890 to 1895; new series sponsored by the four main Extension agencies 1895 to 1904).

1: *Introduction*

1. *UEJ*, February 1891, p. 3.
2. Klaus Künzel "The missionary dons", *Studies in Adult Education* 7, 1975, pp. 34–52.
3. As will appear in Chapter 5, the educational realities of Extension were not as impressive as its statistics.
4. The two invaluable scholarly works on University Extension are N. A. Jepson *The Beginnings of English University Adult Education* (Michael Joseph, 1973) and Edwin Welch *The Peripatetic University* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1973). Both of these, however, treat Extension as a phase in the history of adult education fairly narrowly understood. Künzel's "Missionary dons" deliberately places the antecedents of Extension in the wider context of social and academic change; so far the only clear acknowledgment that the Extension movement had "national" aspirations and should be studied as "part of the total educational system" is in Prof. Jepson's inaugural lecture, "University adult education — 99 years old", *University of Leeds Review* 15, 1972, pp. 280–85. An attempt to apply the sociological theory of organisations to the internal workings of the Extension system can be found in Chapter 3 of Christopher Duke and Stuart Marriott *Paper Awards in Liberal Adult*

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Education (Michael Joseph, 1973); the present study grew out of that preliminary essay.

5. Welch (1973), chap. 5.

2: *University education for the whole nation*

1. See Welch (1973), chaps. 2 and 3 for this formative period. After 1875 Stuart's academic and political activities drew him away from Extension work; he did however continue for many years as chairman of the Universities Joint Board which gave academic supervision to the London Society, and as such took a lively interest in the idea of an "open" university.
2. James Stuart *University Extension* (Leeds: Moxon, 1871) and *A Letter on University Extension* (Cambridge: Trinity College, 23 November 1871).
3. Stuart's correspondence, 13 March and 6 April 1872 in BEMS 1/2.
4. R. D. Roberts *University Extension under the Old and the New Conditions* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1908), p. 13.
5. The Rev. W. Moore Ede *Report* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1875). Ede and Stuart were both involved in the establishment of the university college in Nottingham; William Cunningham, Cambridge's superintendent lecturer in Liverpool, was also a strong advocate of the local college solution.
6. Stuart *An Inaugural Address* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1892). The account of Oxford affairs is drawn from W. R. Ward *Victorian Oxford* (Frank Cass, 1965), pp. 284–88.
7. Social Science Congress 1878 *Transactions*, pp. 367–71; Cambridge, *Report*, 1878 and 1881; Welch (1973), pp. 68–72; Ward (1965), p. 288.
8. Rita McWilliams-Tullberg *Women at Cambridge* (Gollancz, 1975), pp. 80 and 235 n. 23.
9. S. G. Johnson "On the relations of provincial colleges to a university", *Health Exhibition Literature XV* (William Clowes, 1884), pp. 341–42 (International Health Exhibition, London 1884: Conference on Education, Section C).
10. Roberts (1908), p. 8.
11. F. D. Maurice *Learning and Working* (Macmillan, 1855), Lecture VI.
12. H. P. Smith *Labour and Learning* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1956), p. 38.
13. *Oxford University Extension* (Macmillan, 1866), Commitee VI.
14. Quoted in Smith (1956), p. 32.
15. Stuart's correspondence, 6 April 1872 in BEMS 1/2.
16. Roberts (1908), p. 9.
17. Henry Nevinson *Changes and Chances* (Nisbet, 1923), p. 85.
18. Joshua Fitch "University work in great towns", *Nineteenth Century* 4, 1878, p. 893. Fitch noted the very hesitant progress of the London Society; in the capital Extension was neither helped nor hindered by the local college movement, but it shared in the general revival of adult education in the mid 1880s.

19. Social Science Congress 1883 *Transactions*, p. 329.

20. Stuart *University Extension* (1871), p. 4.

21. The addresses were printed in *Health Exhibition Literature XVI* (Conference on Education, Section D): R. D. Roberts "On the requirements of a truly national system of higher education", pp. 187–97; Albert Grey "The University Extension movement", pp. 226–52; E. T. Cook "The University Extension movement", pp. 252–66. Grey, who succeeded to his uncle's earldom, was a Liberal of independent views; from Trinity College days he had been a friend of Stuart's. Cook had been a member of Arnold Toynbee's Liberal-Idealist coterie and in both adult education and journalism was closely connected with Alfred Milner; in 1885 he gave up Extension work and was soon to achieve prominence as a journalist and editor.

22. Roberts (1884), p. 195.

23. Cook (1884), pp. 253–54.

24. B. B. Thomas "R. D. Roberts and adult education" in Thomas (ed.) *Harlech Studies* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1938), pp. 1–35. The details of Roberts' career are complicated and slight inaccuracy crept into Thomas' account: Roberts was assistant secretary at Cambridge from 1881 to 1891; from 1885 he was also secretary to the London Society, and made that his sole office between 1891 and 1895; in the latter year he returned to Cambridge as chief secretary for Local Lectures; finally he became first registrar to the new London Extension Board in 1902 and held that position until his death in 1911.

25. M. E. Sadler "Introduction" to W. F. Moulton *Richard Green Moulton* (Epworth Press, 1926), p. 10.

26. R. G. Moulton's autobiographical notes, entry of 12 May 1885 in BEMS 3/145.

27. R. G. Moulton's memorandum, October 1884 in BEMS 22/1.

28. R. D. Roberts *The University Extension Scheme as the Basis of a System of National Higher Education* (Aberystwyth: Gibson, 1887).

29. These papers of Moulton's provide variations on the same set of ideas. The account draws on all of them without the luxury of detailed citation. The references are: *The University of the Future: an educational speculation* (Cambridge, 1886?) in BEMS 22/1 and reprinted in *OUEG*, June 1892; *The Reorganisation of Liberal Education* (Cambridge, for private circulation, 1886?) in BEMS 22/2; *Address on the University Extension Movement* (Philadelphia: American Society for the Extension of University Teaching, 1890?); "University Extension and the university of the future", *Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science*, Supplementary Notes No. 1, 1891.

30. R. D. Roberts "Aims, expectations, and university credits", *University Extension* (Philadelphia), July 1893, [p. 31 misprinted as p. 447].

31. Moulton (1890), p. 9.

3: *Suggested outline of a charter*

1. Cambridge, Roberts' *Report to Syndicate*, 1885 and 1886, "Report on a conference . . .", *Cambridge University Reporter*, 16 March 1887.

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2. Roberts (1893), [p. 31].
3. Moulton's autobiographical notes; see also W. F. Moulton (1926).
4. The account of the university problem in London is taken from Royal Commission on the New University for London *Report*, C. 5709 (1889).
5. London, Council minutes, 8 May 1888.
6. McWilliams-Tullberg (1975).
7. R. D. Roberts in *Journal of Education*, August 1888, p. 373.
8. Roberts (1888), p. 374.
9. London University Commission *Minutes of Evidence*, C. 5709–I (1889), p. 185.
10. *Evidence*, p. 190.
11. *Evidence*, pp. 191–2 and 196.
12. London, *Report of Council*, 1888.
13. *Evidence*, pp. 274–77.
14. *Evidence*, pp. 287–93.
15. *Evidence*, pp. 58, 191, 198–200 and 214–15.
16. London, Council minutes, 3 March, 24 March and 5 May 1891.
17. London University Commission *Report* (1889).
18. London, Council minutes, 19 November 1889; *UEJ*, March 1890.
19. *UEJ*, March and December 1891.
20. London, Council minutes, 11 November 1891.
21. *Journal of Education*, December 1891, p. 629.
22. London, Council minutes, 8 December 1891 and 26 January 1892; draft petition annexed minutes, 9 February 1892; *UEJ*, January and February 1892.
23. State Paper 73, *British Parliamentary Papers* 1892, LX.
24. London, Council's *Memorandum*, 17 May 1892.
25. Gresham University Commission *Minutes of Evidence*, C. 7425 (1894), pp. 480 and 507–8. The reference to an "associateship" related to an idea of Canon G. F. Browne (one of the Commissioners), which is discussed in Chapter 4.
26. Gresham *Evidence*, pp. 480 and 482.
27. Gresham *Evidence*, pp. 481, 490–91, 505 and 508.
28. E. L. Ellis *The University College of Wales Aberystwyth 1872–1972* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1972), p. 51.
29. Quoted in Thomas (1938), p. 2.
30. Ellis (1972), pp. 77–78.
31. Ellis, p. 84.
32. Roberts (1887); D. Emrys Evans *The University of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1953), p. 38.

33. Evans (1953), p. 38.
34. Evans, p. 39; *The Times*, 12 November 1891; Thomas (1938).
35. J. Owen "The constitution of the Welsh university", *Welsh Review*, February 1892, pp. 368–78.
36. Ellis (1972), p. 110.
37. Evans (1953), p. 41.
38. Ellis, p. 112.
39. Evans, chap. 5; Ellis, p. 110.
40. *OUEG*, February 1893, p. 57. Despite these disappointments Roberts continued to serve higher education in Wales, holding a number of distinguished offices in the University and at Aberystwyth.
41. Gresham Commission *Report*, C. 7259 (1894), p. xvii; *UEJ*, March 1894.

4: *Objections: degrees on the cheap*

1. See Edwin Welch "Oxford and University Extension", *Studies in Adult Education* 10, 1978, pp. 39–49 and Stuart Marriott "Dr. Welch on 'Oxford and University Extension' ", *Studies* 11, 1979, pp. 12–27.
2. *UEJ*, February 1892.
3. "The educational possibilities of University Extension" (August 1889) annexed Oxford minutes; *Oxford Guardian*, 14 August 1889; Hewins Papers (Sheffield University), 42/154.
4. "The educational possibilities", pp. 3–4.
5. *OUEG*, August 1891, p. 129.
6. *UEJ*, August 1891; *OUEG*, Summer Meeting No. 1891.
7. *OUEG*, March and April 1892.
8. H. J. Mackinder and M. E. Sadler *University Extension, Past, Present, and Future* (Cassell, 1891), p. 74.
9. A. Espinas "L'extension des universités: II", *Revue Internationale de l'Enseignement* 23, 1892, p. 325 n. 1.
10. Three colleges were eventually set up, at Reading, Exeter and Colchester; they were intended to be a novel type of institution, coordinating existing efforts in intermediate and adult education. The third faded away and the other two soon took the route towards conventional college status.
11. *OUEG*, November 1892, p. 19; see also Summer Meeting No. 1892 and October 1892.
12. *OUEG*, November 1892, p. 19.
13. M. E. Sadler "University Extension" in J. Wells (ed.) *Oxford and Oxford Life* (Methuen, 1892), pp. 164–90.
14. *OUEG*, May and June 1892.

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15. *OUEG*, March and April 1893.
16. *OUEG*, March and July 1894; February 1895, p. 52; University Extension Congress *Report* (P. S. King, 1894).
17. McWilliams-Tullberg (1975), chap. 6.
18. Oxford, Berry to Sadler, 15 February 1893 in File 70; see also Welch (1973), chap. 6; *UEJ*, September 1891.
19. *UEJ*, February and March 1894; McWilliams-Tullberg, pp. 87–88.
20. Marriott (1979).
21. Gresham Commission *Evidence*, p. 512.
22. Welch (1973), chap. 5.
23. *UEJ*, April 1892; *OUEG*, April 1892.
24. Gresham Commission *Evidence*, pp. 480, 484–86 and 493.
25. *Evidence*, pp. 506–7.
26. Espinas (1892).
27. *OUEG*, March and April 1892.
28. Sadler and Wells in *OUEG*, *October* 1892, pp. 8–9. Wells (later Warden of Wadham College) was a resident fellow, but he was also active in Extension work and for a time held a district director's position for the west midlands. He appears to have been involved there in unsuccessful attempts to set up further colleges on the Reading pattern.
29. Sadler (1892), p. 184.
30. *OUEG*, May 1892, p. 95; see also March and April 1893.
31. Evans (1953), p. 41.
32. *OUEG*, March 1894.
33. Gresham Commission *Evidence*, p. 507; Moulton *The University of the Future* (1886).
34. *OUEG*, July 1894.
35. *OUEG*, February 1895.
36. See R. G. McPherson *Theory of Higher Education in Nineteenth-Century England* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1959).

5: *Interpretations: a matter of motives*

1. Correspondence in *UEJ*, April 1898.
2. Roberts (1908), p. 11.
3. Gresham Commission *Evidence*, p. 492.
4. Stuart *University Extension* (1871) and his address to the 1893 Chicago Extension Congress reported in *UEJ*, October 1893.

5. Gresham Commission *Evidence*, p. 507; *UEJ*, April 1893.
6. *Evidence*, p. 506.
7. Jepson (1973) provides an authoritative account of the problem of educational standards in University Extension up to 1903.
8. London, *Report of Council*, 1891/2 to 1894/5. Appeal to the published statistics is inevitably approximate. There were no reliable records of enrolments and the figures were usually little better than the lecturer's or local secretary's estimate of regular or average attendances. The figures for sessional certificates give an optimistic picture; the increasing popularity of these awards was a result of their official recognition in the pupil-teacher curriculum, a factor referred to later in this Chapter.
9. Jepson (1973), chap. 23 and Appendix; London, *Report of Council*, 1887 to 1901/2.
10. University for London Commission *Evidence*, p. 193; Gresham Commission *Evidence*, p. 479.
11. Gresham *Evidence*, pp. 482, 486 and 506.
12. University Extension Congress (1894), p. 100.
13. Gresham *Evidence*, p. 482; Roberts (1887); Espinas (1892), p. 325 n.1.
14. Lord Salisbury on the Egyptian question in 1879, quoted in *Africa and the Victorians* by R. Robinson and J. Gallagher.
15. *UEJ*, February 1894.
16. Gresham *Evidence*, p. 507; *UEJ*, June 1893.
17. Mackinder and Sadler (1891), p. 74; *OUEG*, December 1893.
18. University Extension Congress (1894), p. 56.
19. See the Musgrove–Perkin debate in *Economic History Review* 12, 1959 and 14, 1961; also D. C. Marsh *The Changing Social Structure of England and Wales 1871–1951* (Routledge, 1965) and J. A. Banks *Prosperity and Parenthood* (Routledge, 1954).
20. Churton Collins' correspondence, 15 July 1888 quoted in L. C. Collins *Life and Memoirs of John Churton Collins* (Bodley Head, 1912), p. 64.
21. L. C. Collins (1912); J. C. Collins "The universities in contact with the people", *Nineteenth Century* 26, 1889, pp. 561–83 and "A university for the people", *Nineteenth Century* 45, 1899, pp. 465–76.
22. R. G. Moulton "University Extension as the university of the future", *Book News* (Philadelphia) 9, 1891, p. 340.
23. Gresham Commission *Evidence*, p. 487.
24. *OUEG*, September 1892.
25. Report of the Oxford Extension conference of 1892, *The English Universities and the English People* (Oxford: The Chronicle, 1892), p. 4.
26. Melvin Richter *The Politics of Conscience* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964).

27. Albert Grey (1884), p. 241. Recession and a trade dispute soon put an end to this brave experiment; nevertheless the Northumberland scheme became an enduring part of the Extension lore.
28. Stuart *University Extension* (1871); Social Science Congress 1875 *Transactions*, p. 429.
29. Moulton *The University of the Future* (1886).
30. Moulton in *Johns Hopkins University Studies* (1891), p. 222 and *Book News* (1891), p. 340.
31. A. M. A. H. Rogers *Degrees by Degrees* (Oxford: The University Press, 1938), pp. 30 and 36–39.
32. Duke and Marriott (1973), chap. 3.

6: *Opening other doors*

1. Cambridge, Roberts' *Report to Syndicate*, 1895 and 1896.
2. Cambridge, H. E. Malden to Roberts, 1896 in BEMS 38/14.
3. Cambridge, A. W. Clayden to Roberts, 8 October 1896 and J. E. Symes to Roberts, 9 May 1898 in BEMS 38/14.
4. Cambridge, Jessie Montgomery to Roberts, 18 October [1897] in BEMS 38/14.
5. McWilliams-Tullberg (1975); Rogers (1938).
6. Cambridge, Diploma schemes in BEMS 38/14; *UEJ*, July 1898.
7. *UEJ*, July 1898, pp. 136–37.
8. McWilliams-Tullberg (1975), p. 91.
9. Cambridge, flysheets in BEMS 38/14; *Oxford Magazine*, 25 May 1898; *The Times*, 26 May 1898.
10. Cambridge, Alice Thompson to Roberts, 27 May 1898 and Jessie Montgomery to Roberts, 28 May 1898 in BEMS 38/14.
11. *UEJ*, April 1898.
12. University of London Act, *Report*, Cd. 83 (1900) and *Statutes*, State Paper 60, *BPP* 1900 LXVI.
13. *Statutes*, p. 8.
14. *UEJ*, May 1903; see also John Burrows *University Adult Education in London* (University of London, 1976), p. 31.
15. R. D. Roberts (1908).
16. Roberts (1908), pp. 20 and 21.
17. London, minutes, 1 April 1908.
18. London, minutes, 20 May 1908.

19. London, minutes, July 1908 to February 1909; University Senate, minutes, 16 December 1908.

20. Roberts (1908); Burrows (1976), p. 31.

21. B. B. Thomas (1938). Thomas' account is sensitive and perceptive, but it is very clearly shaped by the author's own commitments in adult education and by the mood of the period in which it was written; it implicitly takes the Tutorial Class movement as the final revelation of the essence of adult education, and therefore Roberts and his own times come off rather badly. Thomas had access to private papers which cannot now be traced, and so it is not possible to check statements about Roberts' personal experience.

22. The tutorial classes were comparatively well subsidised, originally by private benefaction and later by Board of Education grant-aid; thus it was possible to limit enrolments and to ask students to pledge themselves to study over a period of years. The W.E.A. did the local organising and the universities guaranteed the academic standing of the classes.

23. Bernard Jennings "The Oxford Report reconsidered", *Studies in Adult Education* 7, 1975, pp. 53–65.

24. London, University Senate, minutes, 16 December 1908.

25. Royal Commission on University Education in London *Minutes of Evidence*, Cd. 6718 (1913), pp. 143–53.

26. Albert Mansbridge *University Tutorial Classes* (Longmans, 1913), p. 56; see also Bernard Jennings *Knowledge is Power* (University of Hull, Department of Adult Education, 1979), chap. 1.

27. Mansbridge (1913), p. 16. Professor Jennings' forthcoming biography of Mansbridge is expected to chart the considerable hostilities provoked by the campaign to introduce tutorial classes.

28. Royal Commission *Final Report*, Cd. 6717 (1913), pp. 187–89.

29. Ministry of Reconstruction, Adult Education Committee *Final Report*, Cmd. 321 (1919), pp. 68–72.

30. Para. 119 of the *Final Report* quotes from Roberts' address of 1908 in order to exemplify what were supposed to be his views. The chosen passage is taken somewhat out of context and it also contains an error, which seems to be one of transcription rather than a misprint. The effect is to strengthen the impression that the author of this section wished to convey — that Roberts believed the power to award something like a vocationally useful degree would be the salvation of the local centres for university adult education. That is a travesty of Roberts' views of any date, and especially of 1908.

7: *Postscript*

1. F. J. Taylor "The making of the 1919 Report", *Studies in Adult Education* 8, 1976, pp. 134–48.

2. D. H. S. Cranage "An external degree?", *Cambridge Review*, 8 November 1918. (Cranage added the word "equivalent" in order to avoid the still-vexed question of degrees for women.)

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3. B. W. Pashley *University Extension Reconsidered*, Vaughan College Papers No. 11 (Leicester University, Department of Adult Education, 1968), chaps. 2 and 3.
4. Association of Tutorial Class Tutors, minutes of General Meeting, 7/8 April 1923. The W.E.A., to which the Tutors' Association was especially sympathetic, has never lost its distaste for examinations and paper awards.
5. Duke and Marriott (1973), chap. 3; Burows (1976), pp. 49–51.
6. See Duke and Marriott for a sociological account of these developments and non-developments.

A Backstairs to a Degree is an account of a brave and revealing failure. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century leading figures in the University Extension movement (the ancestor of modern university adult education) were active in demanding a completely open system of access to degrees. Had they succeeded they would have created a 'floating university' for part-time adult students, offering academic credits to those compelled to remain in their ordinary occupations in life. This study sets their campaign against the background of the ideals and organisational problems of Extension itself, and the rapid development of conventional university education. It explores the reasons for their failure and suggests why the idea of an open university had to be reinvented over seventy years later.

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